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and Country Magazine

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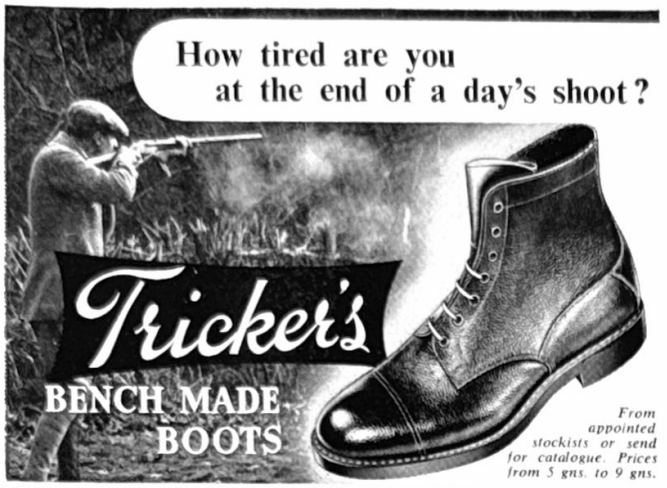

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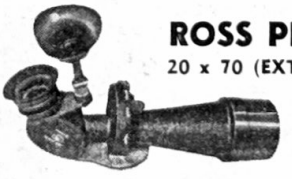

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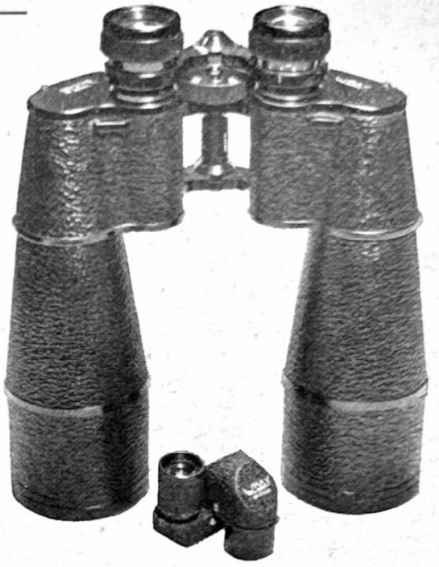

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FIVE YEAR PLAN

SOME time ago in this column we discussed the sorry past and slightly more hopeful future of shooting in Ireland, commenting that what the sport required was some of the enthusiasm and energies now being injected into fishery development.

Just how ambitious is the scheme for the development and exploitation of angling in Ireland is shown in the summary of the recently drafted Five Year Plan, drawn up by Bord Failte in consultation with the Inland Fisheries' Trust and the Electricity Supply Board.

In the next five years about £140,000 will be spent on opening up angling waters and ensuring that adequate accommodation for anglers is provided.

The social aspect of the scheme is of significance. Most of the development will occur in areas containing small towns and villages with few or no industries and not favourably situated economically. Many small centres are dependent on the hiring of boats, and the provision of food and accommodation to angling visitors, so that the plan will provide employment in such areas.

Up to now, the Irish fisherman has taken little interest in coarse fishing, which is a major attraction in this country and on the Continent, particularly in France, but Bord Failte is aware that in Britain alone there are many coarse fishermen, and a scarcity of waters in which to fish. Moreover English coarse fishermen are becoming increasingly aware of the facilities which Ireland has to offer.

During the initial stages, the planners will concentrate on improving existing facilities by trying to expand the volume of accommodation at present available, by facilitating access to the fishing waters and by restocking, where necessary, suitable lakes and rivers in selected areas. It is believed that at the present time coarse fish are available in sufficient quantities, but the main difficulties in exploiting them are the lack of sufficient accommodation in the coarse fishing areas and the physical difficulties of getting at the waters. As a result it is the considered opinion that under present circumstances no more than about 6,000 anglers could be accommodated in any one season.

The result of the operations now proposed will be to open up existing and additional areas for the benefit of many more anglers. The final objective of the five year plan now proposed is the rehabilitation and exploitation of 75 per cent of the total exploitable waters in the country, while improvements will also be made to game fishing waters and the possibility of exploiting sea angling will be explored. Exploitation is the keynote, but at the same time it is an ugly word, and never more hideous than when applied to sport of any kind.

We appreciate the Irish Tourist Board's intentions and wish them well in any undertaking which will prove generally beneficial to their country, but we sincerely hope that the essential character of peaceful sport in wild and lovely surroundings will not be destroyed by the exploitation of the countryside and its visitors.

THE SHOOTING TIMES AND COUNTRY MAGAZINE

Official Organ of THE WILDFOWLERS' ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

No. 3905 FRIDAY, JULY 12th, 1957 Founded 1882

The wild life of today is not ours to dispose of as we please. We have it in trust. We must account for it to those who come after.—King George VI.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Rabbit Prosecution

At Inverness Sheriff Court on June 25 what is believed to be the first prosecution of its kind in Britain, resulted in Mr. A. E. Hatton being fined £5 for allowing rabbits to run wild on his land at Balmacaan House, Drumnadrochit.

In September the Agricultural Department served a notice on him and they sent a trapper to clear out the rabbits. A Department of Agriculture spokesman said that it took the trapper a month to kill the 82 rabbits, and added "We hope this action will make people realise that we intend to wipe out the rabbits."

"People are given plenty of warnings and if they are going to refuse to accept them we are going to take court action."

Mr. Hatton, of Royston, Lancs., told the court that it had been seven years since he had been at the house. Last year he had been ill and had been unable to attend to the correspondence from the department. He promised he would employ a man to deal with the rabbits in future.

The Wildfowler

The Wildfowler, the annual magazine of The Wildfowlers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland is now on sale, and having read the latest edition I can recommend it as a very good half-crown's worth.

Articles scientific and amusing, on many different aspects of shooting and fishing, some excellent photographs and even poetry have been contributed by writers well known in wildfowling circles and the production deserves the utmost support from all fowling clubs, especially since receipts from sales go to swell the funds of W.A.G.B.I.

Copies may be obtained direct from the Editor, P. J. Smith, All-y-Bryn, Deganwy Road, Deganwy, N. Wales.

The price per copy, including postage, is 2s. 9d.

Game Prospects

One keeper, at least, has answered my appeal for news of game. He is Mr. E. G. Uden, headkeeper on the Ashenden Estate in Kent, and he reports that, although there is still some time to go, so far "everything in the garden is lovely." Wild pheasants have again done very well and broods of six to eight week old birds number up to 16 strong. Some of his hand-reared birds were already in covert on June 26. Rearing pens have been used, with good results.

Mr. Uden has been hand-rearing partridges also. He buys no special food for them, nor does he give them ants' eggs, preferring to rely on his own feeding formula. When the partridges were 3½ weeks old, he had lost only three of them, through trampling. "What a nice change," he writes, "to get two seasons of good hatching combined with good weather."

But there was some bad news amongst the good. This keeper refers to some spring-sown barley chemically dressed. As a result, five partridges, twenty-eight pheasants, scores of finches and various small birds, five jackdaws, nine rooks, and more pigeon than were killed by the organised winter shoots, were picked up dead. The long, dry spell at sowing time followed by the lumpy tilth after rain, which allowed the birds access to the seed for longer than usual, are reckoned to be the contributory reasons for these fatalities.

A.C.A.'s New Chairman

I learn that Major General T. N. F. Wilson, C.B., D.S.O., M.C., has been elected Chairman of the Anglers' Co-operative Association, the national body representing 800 angling societies and nearly half a million anglers in the fight against pollution.

General Wilson, who served with the 60th Rifles, distinguished himself in both world wars. At Dunkirk, he commanded an Infantry Brigade in the rear-guard action.

He is Secretary of the King George's Jubilee Trust—which does widespread work to advance the welfare of the younger generation, and he sees in fishing a splendid recreation for young people. Clean water, he says, is a heritage which must be preserved.

General Wilson is a keen fisherman and lives beside the Thames at Sutton Courtenay where there is celebrated local angling. He travels to London daily and will be able to keep in close touch with the A.C.A's headquarters in the Temple.

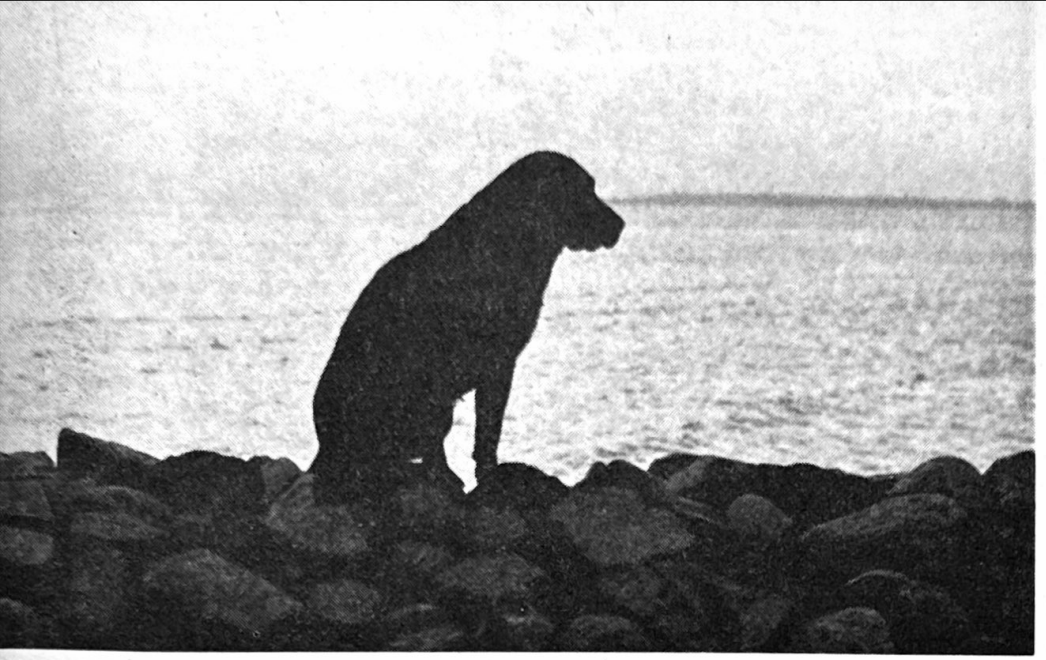
He succeeds as chairman, Mr. Theo Williams, a former general manager of the Port of London Authority.

Weather Scapegoats

Before this nuclear age and the convenient coming of that bomb, who or what had to shoulder the blame for the weather? Anyone or anything disliked or misunderstood, I suppose.

Fifty years ago it was no trouble to find a scapegoat for a wet summer. They put it down to Marconi, "who sets up artificial electrical disturbances and thus interferes with the balance of nature." On the same principle, I am quite prepared to blame any weather which does not suit my requirements on television.

AUCEPS.



A wildfowler's dog reviewing a situation the hard way.

Game and the Drought

The Wildfowler's Dog

by Tower-Bird

PHEW! This weather was not made for me and my dog! Give me the crispness and colours of autumn; the cold and blustering winds of winter. But preserve me from the heat of high summer. I would have slept on the cool, hard boards *under* the bed last night, had not Don beaten me to it. Even there, he, albeit in splendid order, panted like a set of threshing tackle labouring up a steep hill.

The birds we shoot must surely have enjoyed a fine nesting and hatching season, except, of course, in very local spots where cloud-bursts and flooding occurred. But there have been casualties, and I have met with a few of them. Friends who wrote to me in the late spring from northern moorland country assured me that grouse had a splendid start to their breeding season. But a week ago a friend told me of a moor where there was no water, and reckoned that many young grouse must have died from the drought. Old grouse, of course, will leave a waterless moor and descend on one where there is water, but, should springs, etc., dry up at a time when chicks are small, some are certain, I should say, to die.

Even here, on lowland shoots, I do not doubt that partridge chicks, hatched a bit late in the second half of June, felt pretty thirsty at times, for, over a period of days there was little, if any, morning dew, and this quickly vanished. But of insect life there has been no shortage, and a considerable amount of "moisture" comes from insects, which the chicks consume.

Tragedy of the Snipe

There is a small runnel of sewage on a marsh below my cottage, and two pairs of snipe which bred far out on the marsh among the reed-tussocks, have brought their young to this delectable, but odoriferous place. Every time we go that way, Don flushes the old birds, and, with a thin stick, I search for the young among the herbage along the bank's bottom at the edge of the blackish water. They have grown surprisingly within less than a fortnight.

Yet recently, when I was walking beside the dried-up course of a tiny runnel on the landward side of a sea-wall which formed three sides of the meadow where I walked, I came upon tragedy—tragedy in the form of three withered, sun-dried bodies of young snipe. Their mother had obviously led them from some parched water-meadows on the open side of the one containing the small runnel (then no doubt holding water or ooze), and there they were eventually trapped by the drought, as it were, to die miserably beside the deep cracks on the margin of what had recently been a pleasant, if isolated little feeding ground. No doubt, had that mother snipe had the good fortune to have been born a woodcock, she would have picked up her young one by one and transported them over the sea-wall, or to other rich feeding. Or would she?

Early Game Chicks

Wild pheasants seem to have prospered this breeding season, though, admittedly, I have come across no really strong (numerically) broods. But I have seen far earlier pheasant and partridge chicks this year than is usual. Partridges, in fact, seem to have started laying considerably earlier than usual—not the main crop, perhaps, but quite a surprising number of pairs.

As for mallard, I have seldom seen a better lot, though I fear casualties from winged vermin were greater than usual, owing to the lack of cover (in turn due to the drought). Nevertheless, there are plenty of good broods about, though rather too many latish ones.

Only half-an-hour ago I was on a marsh, when I saw a bird among some hay-bales. I put the glass on her, and discovered she was a plover with one well-grown young one, and her mate presently ran out from behind a bale. What had happened to her other chicks, if four eggs hatched, I can only guess. Probably they were killed by vermin, but just as likely by starvation.

Those of us who grow our own vegetables without any fuss have had a pretty poor time of it this year. Only the odd-man-out hereabouts can boast of having pulled a carrot, for either fly or the drought caused them to vanish, wither, or simply not to grow beyond the height of one inch. I dug in four rows yesterday (four rows which had been twice planted), two rows of turnips, and one of beet. I dug the ground deep, despite the burning sun, planted and watered-in a couple of hundred leeks, and cleared off to the coolth of my little beer-house, there to gaze out of the window across the shimmering marshes, and to add my gardening grouse to those of the other two customers—one a professional gardener who was finding it very hard to explain away to "a boss from London" why this and that crop had not flourished, and why this and that vegetable was not appearing on the table. Poor fellow! he was taking his troubles very, very seriously, and any lighthearted banter trickled off his back like water off the proverbial duck's plumage.

Wildfowling Dogs

I am in full agreement with the remarks of our Mr. Moxon on the benefits which can accrue from letting a wildfowling dog run in—not to shot, but to the fall. Thinking over last season alone, I can recall a number of instances when I might well have lost duck, had not Don raced to the fall, arriving, often enough, almost at the same time as the falling duck; even before it on one or two occasions!

I think, however, that our good kennel editor might have made more of this point. He said that, if a dog ran in to the fall, it might reach a duck before it could "run" to water, and so probably escape.

But there is another aspect, and a very important one. Many times I have winged a duck, and hardly had it started to fall, when I was swinging my second barrel on to another duck. I had no chance to watch what happened to the first, but the dog was well on his way to the fall, which knowledge gave me great satisfaction.

Many times, too, I have not been certain whether a duck fired at with the first barrel is coming down; and, if coming down, how quickly and exactly where. But if you know, as you swing on to your second bird, that the first one is being taken care of by a keen-sighted, fast dog, you are less likely to muff the second shot. Knowing that Don will be racing towards any bird hit, I am able to concentrate on the second bird, and am not forced to try and watch two birds at once.

If you simply allow a dog to run into shot, then he becomes a darned nuisance, for, when there are plenty of duck in the air, and you miss your first shot, those duck will see the dog dashing about below, and so pin-point the danger zone. But a duck gathered is a duck in the bag; whereas a duck shot which may escape into deep water or dense reeds is by no means necessarily in the bag.

I can hear at least one reader saying: "But surely, if you know a duck is coming down, you can say 'Go on!' to a steady dog sitting at heel, and he will quickly reach the fall." I do not agree, for a dog which has been taught (and maybe partly self-taught) to run-in when it sees a duck is hit (and any good dog seems to know that), relieves, as I have explained, his master from watching and wondering whether he has hit a duck and if that duck is likely to fall; besides which, he will be half way to the fall before the master of a dog sitting at heel can make up his mind on many occasions whether to send the dog or not, and every second (every split-second) may be valuable if a duck is falling into water, or close to water.

I have frequently watched Don race out and plunge into water after a duck has landed with a mighty splash, and grab it just as it was about to recover itself and dive. Or he has caught a partly stunned one before it has so far recovered as to become a strong diver. Anyway, those of us who shoot wildfowl regularly know exactly what we want, and we train our dogs accordingly.

* * *

Since writing the above, the worries caused

(Continued on next page, col. 3)

The Giant Sparrow-Hawk

by Sea-Pie

A GOOD deal of interest in our larger birds of prey has been recently aroused by authentic news of the osprey returning to some of its ancient breeding haunts in Inverness-shire, and an increase in the number of kites in wild Wales and the west country. But little has been heard during the past five years of the status of that equally fine raptorial species, the goshawk, around the very name of which hangs an aura of romance handed down from the palmy days of falconry and chivalry.

It is a completely forest-loving species, and in days when there were still extensive woodlands in Great Britain, goshawks nested regularly, in some of the Scotch forests, down to the beginning of last century. What a country Rothiemurchus and the Spey Valley must have been with two species of eagles, ospreys, kites, and goshawks, all breeding there together. It is known that English falconers used to "enlarge," as the expression was, their trained goshawks to breed in the wild, in order that young birds might be obtainable for their sport.

However this may be (and some chroniclers lead us to believe this was the custom of falconers as far back as in Saxon times), one must here comment on the extreme wariness and shyness of goshawks. A nest may exist year after year in a particular locality, without anyone being aware of the fact. Beric the Briton's bird-watching capacity must have exceeded that of our own modern contemporaries, for it has recently been announced that the giant sparrow-hawk has been breeding in a wild state in the south of England for a number of years, unbeknown to most of us, and unrecorded till the year of Grace 1950.

Flutter of Excitement

So the flutter of excitement in ornithological circles can be imagined when it was announced by a well-known and absolutely reliable authority that, after an absence of at least a hundred and fifty years, the goshawk was a true "Britisher" once more. It appeared that "somewhere in the south of England" a pair of stuffed adult goshawks had been discovered in a gamekeeper's cottage.

This led to meticulously careful investigations, and it was proved that this secretive king of all the sparrow-hawks had been breeding in England during the past ten or twenty years, if not longer. In 1950 three pairs of goshawks are known to have brought off young. The pair in the keeper's cottage had been shot in 1921.

Not much has been heard of British-breeding goshawks during the past five or six years, but it is well known that modern up-to-date naturalists are sometimes nearly as reticent as goshawks are secretive. The birds are likely to be unpopular with keepers and poultry-rearers, for goshawks will kill for pleasure as a fox will often do. The feet and beak of a goshawk are almost unbelievably powerful. A hen gos, much larger and fiercer than the male, can easily hold down and kill a full-grown hare three times the bird's weight.

Only a few enthusiasts at the present time keep a trained goshawk or two, and the birds are much too valuable to be "enlarged" by their owners. Migratory goshawks with "drop-spotted" breasts are not very rare in this country, but old birds with barred fronts are seldom met with.

As an example of the courage and boldness of this species an episode recorded from Yorkshire many years ago may be worth recalling. A fine female goshawk had frequented the neighbourhood of Flamborough for some weeks, baffling all attempts made to shoot it. One particularly cold January day the head-keeper at Sewerby Hall observed the great hawk kill a full-grown rabbit, which it picked up easily enough and, carrying its prey, flew past the man at a distance of about sixty yards.

The keeper fired at the bird, but it was a long shot and he missed it, though it dropped the rabbit. Concealing himself in an adjoining wood the keeper had not long to wait, for the hungry gos soon came gliding back after its quarry and this time paid the penalty. I think I am right in saying this specimen can still be seen in the Dyke Road museum at Brighton.

In habits and appearance it is simply a huge sparrow-hawk. Goshawks breed sparsely in heavily timbered areas all over the Continent. The same nest is commonly occupied year after year, and generally built in a beech tree. The only one I was ever lucky enough to see was, I think, in an oak, but that was more than fifty years ago when I was living at Petersthal in the Black Forest. Goshawks' eggs are like poorly marked specimens of those of buzzards.

Goshawks (immature with spotted breast), and (left, flying) an adult.

Gather Round, Boys!

So gather round you bird-nesting boys, if any of you are left in these degenerate days. Way back in the year 1907 when staying in Germany I knew about as much of the German language as I do now, and that is—none at all. So when birds-nesting in the wooded Petershal valleys I used to carry in my pocket a card on which a friend had inscribed the words in German "Can you show me the nest of a goshawk?"—or whatever the bird might be I was in search of. This was for the benefit of any "jagger" I encountered on my rambles, with which was displayed a five-mark piece—and in those days a gold English sovereign was worth 25 marks.

On one occasion when scrambling down the steep sides of the slopes from the Griesbach lake I heard a shot at no great distance, and a few minutes later a bearded figure equipped like a huntsman appeared, swinging by its legs a magnificent goshawk, which he had just killed off its nest. On presentation of my card the jagger grinned and pointed up to a large nest in the fork of a tree about forty feet from the ground, and easy enough to climb for a strong boy accustomed to rooks' nests under the English south downs. At first I thought the nest was empty, but a closer inspection detected a single, stained blue-white egg half hidden in a lining of leaves. The jagger offered me the bird as well, but I did not want that. He was pleased and so was I.

Only One Bird of Prey Lost

Having studied the British raptorial birds for more than fifty years, it may be interesting to add a note that within my own memory we have completely lost only one bird of prey; but that was the largest and finest of them all — the great sea-eagle. The kite has hung on, as it were, by its eye-lids, but its small resident population is known to have been supplemented by imported Spanish eggs. No fewer than five species of raptors have increased in numbers. They are Montagu's harrier, hen-harrier, golden eagle, peregrine falcon, and common buzzard.

The three last mentioned may indeed have reached "saturation point," for golden eagles nest as far south as Ben Lomond and in Galloway; while peregrines and buzzards, never in much danger, are now abundant. Some fifty pairs of breeding "Montagu's" may be estimated as the present stock of a species on the verge of extinction when I was a boy.

This leaves four grand birds which seem to be trying to "come back"—the osprey, honey buzzard, marsh-harrier, and goshawk. Every effort is being made to help this "big four," and apparently with some success. The hen harrier alone has remained fairly stationary in numbers during my time. It has remained practically confined to the island of Pomona in Orkney, though it is now slightly on the upgrade, with a few pairs nesting in the Lews, and again in Ireland, and possibly in Sutherland.

All sportsmen and ornithologists wish them well—especially our old friend the giant sparrow-hawk.

Game and the Drought

(Continued from previous page)

by the drought have been at least temporarily relieved. A heavy thunder storm, cannonading round hill and vale, lasted for an hour this evening, and the heavens opened and the rain came down just nicely—by which I mean that there was no sudden deluge to knock the more delicate garden produce for six, but a steady, warm thunder rain which should make the newly-planted flagging winter green stuff sit bolt-upright, like a long-eared owl against the trunk of a larch.

In the calm before the storm, the sky was full of high-flying swifts, swallow and martins, but soon these insect-chasing aces of the air were skimming the ground, and one could hear the snapping of their beaks in the hushed stillness before the storm broke.

For the first time in many months, I heard the *chirr-chirr-chirrr* of what, in my Essex days, we used to call the rain bird—i.e. the greenfinch. This particular "song" is said to foretell the imminence of rain. Certainly it seems to at times, though I have heard it often enough when rain was a week or two away! It is, I suppose, a matter of "atmosphere" which causes bird-song directly before a thunderstorm to have a sort of hollow, richer tone. Mistle-thrush, song-thrush, blackbird, or the said greenfinch frequently seem to challenge an approaching storm with song, and the "atmosphere" brings out the richness and tone of the notes.

SPINNING DOS AND DON'TS

To Spin – or Not to Spin – on Aberdeenshire Dee

by Doric

TIME was in the days of our fathers that a man came to the Dee and fished as he pleased, departing at length well pleased or disgruntled, according to the success or otherwise of his visit. He fished fly for preference, but when the spates rolled along, or the summer salmon sulked, he used his loach or gudgeon or gold sprat, and was not demoralised by the sight of prawn, neither were the fish.

Then, into this placid little Eden, stalked an idea. It was a very complex idea. Built of the stuff of dreams and idealism, it spread over the silver river like an evening mist. It decreed that men could no longer throw a minnow or prawn into the rippling waters after April 15.

In the first year of the idea, no baiting whatsoever was permitted after that date, and it was a bleak jest of fate to bring the river bank high with peaty spill as an inaugural ceremony of nature. Actually fishing with fly, was a futility that May.

After this dim beginning and on second thoughts baiting was allowed after April 15 if the river was above a certain level. Next, certain proprietors took the idea in hand and stranged it. By others it was tenderly preserved and still is.

Among this welter of "though shalt" and "Thou shalt not" on the Dee, the road ahead is not too clear. Is "fly only" justified by results; or is "Baiting allowed" doing the harm its derogators suggested?

Fish today, after several years of the idea, take fly very much as they used to do, and equally do not take (as they also were very fond of doing). The same can safely be said about bait fishing — no discernible change has occurred. What then, was and is the object in having these restrictions at all?

A view from the Mill Pool from the Carlogie side of Dee.

Opponents of spinning—only *after* April 15—but not before, contend that this form of fishing is:

a. Unsporting.
b. injurious to the fish
c. that it spoils the "other fellow's" water.
d. scares fish out of pools.
e. puts salmon "off" fly
f. that prawn will empty a pool
g. etc., etc.

The Greeks first came across this matter and, freely translated, the word they used was "Nonsense."

There we have the skeleton ribs of the idea, and the curious thing about this reasoning is that, in the lower half of the Dee, where the best bags are made often *before* April 15, the obections do not apply. Only when the unhappy angler rents a beat on middle or upper Dee, where the season often has not even started by April 15, do they become operative. (Let us invoke the Greeks again !)

Imponderable Things

Condensing the views of many minnow-phobes, experience and observation can freely dismiss their arguments as mere beliefs, not in any marked degree related to fact.

Imagine a devout Mohammedan and a Lama debating the hereafter—they would blind each other with dogma without bothering overmuch about reality in the present. So with fishing beliefs—they are imponderable things of the mind, and difficult to cope with.

The salmon is a simple creature, not given to displays of cunning, and lives to a gentle rhythm. He is not—again not—the scheming, fly-conscious, bait-fearing, temperamental smart alick of the river we so often are told he is, but rather a terribly rustic child of the troubled waters and his own instincts and reflexes.

He will guzzle a prawn one day, and fly for his life at the sight of a worm. Next day he does the exact opposite. In a summer pool, he and his friends will explode away from a lightly thrown fly and trout line. He will take a fly minutes after a prawn has been fished over him. One minute he will "take" whatever is handy to him; and next minute he loses all interest in living, or lurking otters in spring will send him torpedoing out of the water. Playing otters in summer share the centre of the evening pool with nonchalantly jumping salmon.

Man's inborn desire to equate everything with human conduct and behaviour is responsible for most of the weed-growth of belief that has choked out the simplicity of the salmon's ways. If only we could realise that the salmon is just—a fish !

To a fish — a large fish and strong — aquatic objects are not frightening. Few people would care to agree that a fly scares a salmon, but on occasion it does. On occasion a minnow, worm, prawn, plug, or spoon also scares a salmon, but quick protective fears are fleeting things—not life-long habits. To prevent salmon being startled occasionally the logical thing to prohibit is not baiting—but *fishing*.

The salmon, too, is a migratory creature, and in the Dee, like all rivers his arrival and stay in, and departure from any pool is erratic.

One thing is certain, "he will pass this way but once," and having passed, the tenant of that pool can forget him. In passing, our fish may not take a fly, but he may take a minnow, and if the minnow is not presented to him, one fish less is entered in the book for the beat, and eventually someone higher up catches our hypothetical fish probably on a worm.

Another glorious inconsistency on the Dee is the belief that worm is quite harmless and justified (on high beats particularly), while a prawn is something the good Lord made in error. As a belief, as an attitude of mind, this is acceptable, but what are the experiences and realities upon which this quaint view is built ?

Upper Dee righteously condemns "the spinning" and "the prawning," and happily supports the "restrictive practices" down-river, which ensure that hundreds of salmon survive (that otherwise would assuredly not !) to reach the worm-infested upper reaches and nobly die. (If ever worming is prohibited at the top of the Dee, heaven help its catches—and its rents !)

On Prawning

On "prawning," even at the risk of widespread apoplexy, a new approach could be tried, based on the actual life-habits of salmon: prawn if you must when the "harm" (?) is least and rewards are greatest—*April, May,* and *June* (February and March if you care — the fish will still take it!) Restrict to *fly* only in July, August and September, and help conserve the reddened, gravid fish for their lawful destinies. This appalling heresy may even induce a protest for someone.

There are days on any river both before *and after* April 15 when fly fishing is completely unproductive and when a minnow spun over the lies would vastly increase the hope of a kill. But the rules on certain beats forbid even this innocent attempt to catch a fish. With only a precious week or two of a holiday, the angler feels aggrieved, especially in the knowledge that the rods above him on the next or next-but-one-beat, are "saving the blank" with a wooden minnow.

If anyone—anyone at all—would explain to him why he should be penalised, and make the argument convincing, our angler would willingly accept the law, but no one has ever done so, and no one ever will. Starry-eyed lectures on sportmanship and theoretical benefits, are poor substitutes for a fish one isn't allowed to try to catch.

Among other things, Dee restrictions on baiting take no cognisance of seasonal and variable factors—much snow on the hills into April, cold winds, high rivers and low water temperatures. One little twist of nature puts April 15 into March (for similar conditions), or into May. Any arbitrary date fixed for an alteration of fishing methods can only fail.

On the sportsmanship side of baiting, not much of a case can be made against it today. The ancient twelve-foot bait rods have gone, and with them the No 2 Dressed lines and steel (unbreakable) traces, and the many-hooked phantoms and slotted devons. Today's bait outfit is a slim and delicate thing, a joy to wield and a pleasure to play a fish on. Breaking strains in tackle have dropped from 20-30lb. to 6 and 7, and the single small treble in the most modern baits is in no sense objecable on humanitarian or aesthetic grounds.

Why then restrict baiting at all ? If the few who believe that baiting is bad for the soul and

(Continued on page 552, col. 3)

The keeper of a good woodcock shoot with his cocker.

Round the Game Preserves

by David Imrie

A FEW weeks ago I had a letter from a shooting man who is particularly interested in woodcock, and who is wondering whether he could do anything to make a small covert on his ground more attractive to these birds. At present he is clearing some very dense thickets of blackthorn, which will eventually be replaced by Japanese larch mixed with holly and laurel. Apparently he cannot increase the size of his covert; so I suggest that he is adopting the best plan in the circumstances.

However, this man probably realises that these game birds are rather unpredictable. They appear to favour some localities more than others for no visible reason, even when conditions, from the human point of view, are similar. One can only say with certainty that they live up to their name. They are "wood" cock, and are therefore not likely to be found in numbers far away from coverts of the permanent variety.

It would also be correct to say that they prefer quietness to bustle. No doubt, they ignore a certain amount of human activity, such as the occasional working of foresters; but I should not expect them to haunt a place which is the regular rendezvous of the general public. They might put up with the racket of an arterial roadway, if they had plenty of retreats in the neighbourhood, plus an abundance of suitable food. Nevertheless, woodcock do like quietness and natural surroundings; and if my correspondent (F. J. Peterborough) can give them these necessities, he may have many delightful days with his cocker spaniel or other canine friend, after the woodcock migration has begun.

In Mixed Coverts

In my own locality these birds are most plentiful in the mature, mixed coverts which are well supplied with glades and patches of thin underwood. They like to skulk in the daytime among the open-bottomed rhododendrons, and they nest freely beneath the tall trees where the ground is covered with light grass and dead leaves. The last nest seen by me was, however, in a tuft of rushes, but sufficient dead leaves were lying around to make the sitting bird very inconspicuous. This habit of blending with her surroundings is a strong characteristic of the broody woodcock, and it is possible for even an observant person to look at her without realising that she is there.

Coverts of this sort where some woodcock are found almost all the year round are, of course, not made in a short time. The trees need longer than the full span of a man's lifetime to grow up and thin out; but if the trees already exist without suitable undercover, then something may be done to remedy the deficiency. Larch, birch, rhododendron, laurel, holly, and various kinds of shrubbery might be planted to give the covert an air of seclusion. Unfortunately, clumps of larch and birch grow up rather too quickly, although they are excellent woodcock cover until they are, say, eight or nine feet high. Patches of bracken in the open parts of a covert also appeal to woodcock, but I should hesitate to advise anyone to plant this weed deliberately.

In the Daytime

It is a coincidence that after I wrote the last paragraph I went for a walk in the covert above my home with a cocker spaniel bitch, and she put a woodcock up among some thin bracken behind me. I was vexed for a moment, because I thought that she might have disturbed a nesting bird, but some droppings proved that this woodcock was merely waiting for dusk, so that it could fly off to its feeding grounds unseen. Which brings another point to my mind. Woodcock may lie up during the hours of daylight on hard terrain, providing that it grows the right kind of cover.

For instance, a mature larch covert on this estate was felled at the beginning of the war, which in its heyday hardly ever held a woodcock. It stood too solidly on the fellside, and only a few narrow rides interrupted the gloomy sameness. Furthermore, it was a place where woodcock could have been pounced upon too easily by sparrowhawks. However, two or three years after the larches vanished a crop of birches came up, and they hold woodcock to this day; for these sapling have grown slowly in the hard soil.

But young birches do not invariably make good woodcock cover. Something depends on the undergrowth present. Another conifer plantation which was felled on a peaty, low-lying part of this estate was also followed by birches without delay; but at the same time a veritable thicket of brambles and rushes came up among the self-seeded trees. This combination apparently did not suit the long-billed birds. Whether the fact that foxes made a haunt of this jungle influenced the woodcock or not I do not know; but I do feel fairly certain that the restriction put on their movements by this tangle of vegetation discouraged them very definitely.

It is extremely improbable that the planting of birch on high moorland would entice woodcock to live there. This is one of the places which they do not seem to favour. In a dozen seasons on the North Riding moors I have seen one woodcock only in a grouse drive, and I cannot remember ever having seen one in the hazel thickets that clothe some of the nearby ghylls, although this sort of cover would normally attract a bird or two occasionally in lower country. This woodcock, which rose among the heather must have been an exhausted migrant. It was shot at Raegill butts on Gunnerside Moor.

In the Right Place

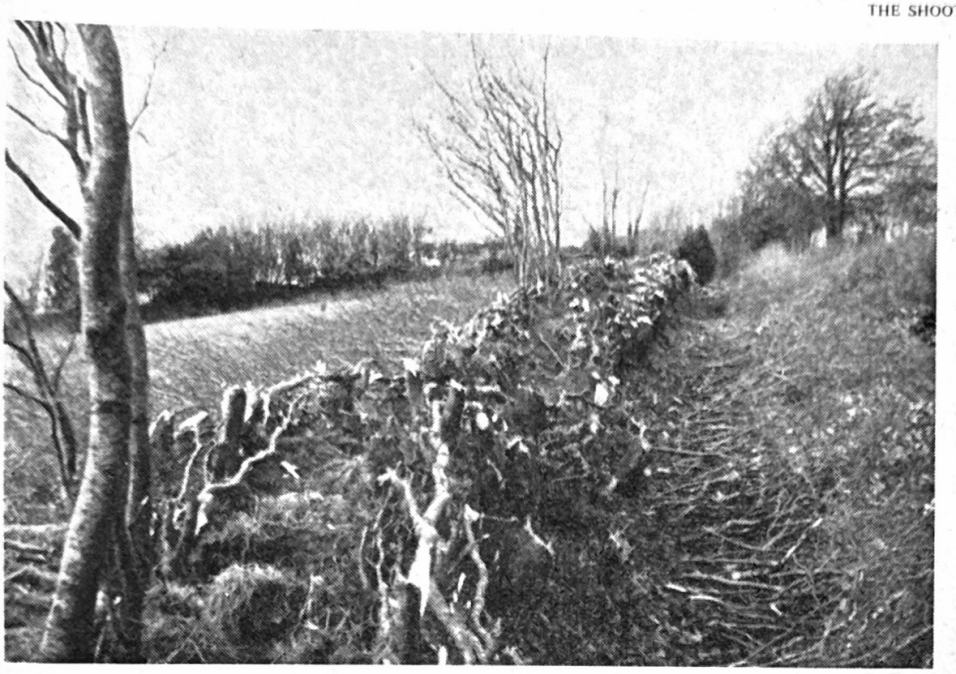
Therefore, we must conclude that any attempt to make a covert more attractive to woodcock stands a better chance of success if it is undertaken near sea level, and within easy reach of suitable moist ground. It will also be much less of a gamble, if it is undertaken in a district which is noted for woodcock. And a district which is noted for woodcock is usually a resting point on the migration route. I should think that very few estates in this country (including Ireland) which are famous for their woodcock bags have ever bred more than a small fraction of these interesting totals. They have just happened to be in the right place with the amenities that appeal to tired woodcock.

According to "Record Bags" by the late Sir Hugh S. Gladstone, the greatest number of woodcock ever shot in Britain in one day was got by six guns at Ashford, Co. Galway, on Lord Ardilaun's estate. This bag of 228 woodcock was made on January 31, 1910, and during five consecutive days' shooting 587 were killed. In 1905 when the Prince of Wales shot with Lord Ardilaun 470 woodcock were killed in the week; but the largest seasonal bag made on the Ashford Estate totalled 752 birds. It was got in 1929. Apparently the increased bags on this estate between 1910 and 1930 were due to the fact that more cover had been planted. This being so, there is hope for the correspondent whom I mentioned at the beginning of this article.

Other notable bags have been got in Scotland. At Islay in 1924 a total of 433 woodcock were killed in eight days, the best day's bag being 97. On the same estate in 1926 five guns killed 533 woodcock also in eight days. The best day's bag of that season, which was 156, was obtained on January 21. In 12 days' shooting at Islay in 1928 the party killed 647 birds, the largest bag for one day being 108. And in January 1929 five guns killed 803 woodcock in 12 days, the totals for the two best days being 104 and 100.

But these colossal bags are put in the shade by the numbers shot during last century. In the season 1846-47, 1,000 woodcock were killed at Ardimersay and Islay; and on Ardimersay shoot in the years 1848 to 1858, excepting 1850 (for which no record exists) 5,066 woodcock were killed. The English record appears to be held by Lanarth, Cornwall, where 106 woodcock were shot on December 21, 1920.

From a consideration of those big bags we gather that the immigration route tends to follow the west of the British Isles. But if we cannot all be at those favoured focal points, we will be unlucky if we do not pick up a few birds when the legions spread out. On the average shoot a dozen woodcock represents a good day, and that number will satisfy me at any time.



A rough shoot "covert" destroyed by the hedger's hook.

The Young Shot

Swans and Snares

by Petrel

IN the friendly, white-walled shade of "The Bush" at Ovington we sought shelter from the searing noonday sun. In a pool behind the inn children splashed merrily, while not so far away upstream, disdainful Itchen trout lazed in the clear current below the narrow bridge, quite unconcerned at the envious attention displayed by passers-by.

On this famous stretch no fish is considered keepable unless it scales a pound or more, and how well those eight-ouncers plus beneath the arches looked as if they knew the rules. I felt like a Pagan in Christendom and tried to put out of my mind the concern I had been feeling earlier at the continued drought and increasing difficulty of obtaining worms for encompassing the downfall of trout on other waters. When it comes to fishing, I am no purist. Where I fish you cannot afford to be, for the weighty, pink-fleshed, bottom-feeding cannibals I seek turn down their noses at unsatisfying flies.

But I will not be drawn into arguments anent the ethics of fishing—especially on such a sacred river. The conversation was steered into safer channels, and if there is one thing on which trout anglers and shooters will agree it is that swans, in quantity, for all their grace and beauty, are unwelcome on a trout stream or on a duck preserve.

Most of us know that the mute swan is the subject of an enquiry at present being conducted by the Nature Conservancy and The Wildfowlers' Association. But, at the same time, there is a certain amount of muddled thinking about the bird, or so it seems to me, for twice recently I have heard of swans being shot—in both cases by fishermen or water bailiffs—and on each occasion when I remonstrated that such action, however necessary, was illegal, I was told, "Oh, no. You can get permission to shoot them."

Satisfying the Court

Well, I would like to know how. If this were the case what would be the point of the present enquiry, referred to above? The plain fact is, of course, that swans, like all other birds not catered for under special schedules of the Protection of Birds Act 1954, are *protected* and may not be shot.

However, Section 4 (2) (a) of the Act is significant, and I can hear the "legal eagles" sharpening their beaks.

This states that: "Notwithstanding any of the provisions of Section one, or of any order made under Section three of this Act, a person shall not be found guilty of an offence against this Act by reason of the killing or injuring of, or an attempt to kill, a wild bird other than a bird included in the First Schedule to this Act *if he satisfies the court before whom he is charged that his action was necessary for the purpose of preventing serious damage to* crops, vegetables, fruit, growing timber, or any other form of property *or to fisheries*; (my italics).

This, needless to say, gives no one permission to shoot a swan (or a heron, by the way). If you fail to satisfy the court you will be fined £5 for each swan shot. If you make a practice of shooting swans, you are certain to be charged, and the onus of proof is on you. If the chairman of the bench is a trout fisherman . . . but perhaps we should move on.

Snaring Again

It is a sign of the times, and a welcome one as well, that we have started snaring again. Now that the hay has been carted, the wood-side meadows lend themselves to this intriguing sport, and the well-worn runs from hedge to field centre, and the abundance of droppings throughout their length show that wiring is again worthwhile. These days the expert snarer is in a very small majority and young shots of the modern school are often hard put to it to find a teacher of the art. And I use the word art advisedly for there is more to wiring a rabbit than at first there might appear to be.

The rabbit snare consists of seven strands of thin brass wire twisted together to form one thicker strand, one end of which is attached to a brass eyelet, through which passes the free end of the wire to form a running noose. Through a loop in the free end of the wire is attached a double length of cord and that is all there is to it. So much can be bought ready-made, and there is little point in wasting time making one's own wires for the sake of a few coppers, twisting and weaving strands suspended with a weight depending.

The fittings comprise two pegs, to one of which the snare cord is attached and which, driven into the ground near the run, anchors the wire. The second, known as a "pricker" or "tealer," is a shorter, slender stick, sharpened at the base and with a shallow split in the top to hold the wire in its correct position over the run.

The peg obviously must be a strong one which will not snap at the shock of a rabbit's impact on the wire, neither must it pull up easily. Its length, therefore, will depend upon the type of ground: in soft soil a longer peg will be necessary. An average of six to nine inches is generally suitable. Ash or beech are good woods to use, and a notch cut round the top of the peg, or a natural hook-like projection if a suitable piece of wood can be selected will hold the cord tightly secured in position.

The tealer should be as thin as possible so that it does not obtrude obviously beside the run, but at the same time it must be thick enough to support the wire against wind and until the rabbit is in the snare. The wire, wrapped once round the tealer before being lodged in the notch, will help to support the noose. Hazel makes a useful tealer, and up to ¼-inch diameter is not too thick.

Set Well Out

Generally speaking, the farther from the hedge snares are set, the more effective will they be, and put down in lines on *every* run they are easy to find when the time comes to pick up. The number set should be carefully counted so that if, when a check is made of all wires taken up, one is found to be missing, a further search can be made. Although a broken "eyed" snare will work loose and drop off the leg of cattle, sheep and dogs, it may catch and hold something smaller, including pheasants and partridges, so the utmost care must be taken to see that none is forgotten. Wires should be picked up as early as possible, not only because it is inhumane to leave a live rabbit one for anything but the shortest possible time, but also to avoid the catch being spoiled by vermin.

An expert can set a wire with considerable speed. As he walks along out in the meadow he will notice the heavily flattened patches in a run which show where the rabbit takes off and lands on its jumping run, and across the jump he will place his wire, bending to heel in the peg and set up the noose almost in one movement. Such speed can only come from practice and it will take the amateur longer to arrange a snare as it should be set.

The peg must be driven home to the hilt well clear of the run, and the top of it may need a little camouflage in the shape of grass or leaves. The tealer must also stand away from the run and is less obvious if it slants at an angle so that the cleft which holds the wire is on a level with the side of the run. The noose is shaped flat at the bottom and rounded at the top, supported with the base a good four inches off the ground. A hand's breadth plus a little more for luck is a useful way of measuring the height

The usual mistake is to set the wire too low, when it will be knocked over, or to make the noose too large, when it will catch the rabbit round the body. A run along the side of a slope needs a higher wire than one-running from top to bottom, but generally speaking, the higher the snare is set, the more effective will it be. Set right it will catch the rabbit cleanly round the neck. Some clever snarers can set a small wire which takes the rabbit across the forehead in front of the ears, and if the animal is travelling at speed the resultant backward jerk dislocates its neck.

A Day With Jack Collins

by W. C.

IN July 1953 I had a day's pigeon shooting with Jack Collins of Marden in Kent, an account of which appeared in *The Shooting Times*. Since then, although we had occasionally written to each other about pigeon, I had seen him only once. That was when I took some decoys for him to repaint, a job which he does beautifully and for a very modest fee.

At that time he was "cherry-minding." As I happened to have a gun with me, we walked round two orchards together, and I performed the notable feat of wiping his eye on a cherry gorged starling.

Now Jack has given up shooting pigeon for a living. With the birds fetching only a shilling or so, there are not enough about for a shot of even his ability and knowledge of their movements to make much out of it. He is driving a tractor instead. Nevertheless, he still likes an occasional day's decoying, and as I was spending Whitsun this year in East Sussex, I arranged to call for him at 1 p.m. on Saturday June 8.

My hopes, as I motored to Marden, were not high. I doubted if the pigeon would be eating any particular crop at this time of year. Moreover, during the whole of my thirty-mile drive, I did not see even one; and when I had my picnic on the outskirts of the village, my binoculars, swept repeatedly to and fro over a wide stretch of country, revealed nothing but a pair of turtle doves.

After I had collected Jack, we drove from one likely place to another for an hour and a half. There was not a pigeon to be seen, except one pair picked out by the binoculars at a great distance. During the previous week they had been on a field covered with chickweed, but had since departed. Our failure to find them now was made all the sadder by the fact that it was a perfect day for some interesting shooting over decoys—blue sky, cotton-wool clouds, and a strongish wind.

Hope had almost been abandoned when Jack chanced to catch sight of one of his fellow farmworkers in his garden. I stopped the car while he asked his friend if he could give us any news of the pigeon. "Yes," he replied, "I saw some on the peas on Down Farm yesterday."

Off then to Down Farm, where we turned into a lane and came out on a grass field at the back of the farmyard. The peas, said Jack, were beyond this field.

Just as we were getting out of the car we saw about fifteen pigeon flighting over a group of oaks at one end of the hedge dividing the peas from the grass field. We found only one or two pigeon on the peas, so it was decided that our best bet, since we had seen this lot flighting over the oaks, was to build a hide, with its back to the pea-field and to the wind, in the fence alongside the trees, and to put the decoys on the grass to leeward, in order to induce any pigeon that might come wide of us, to swing our way.

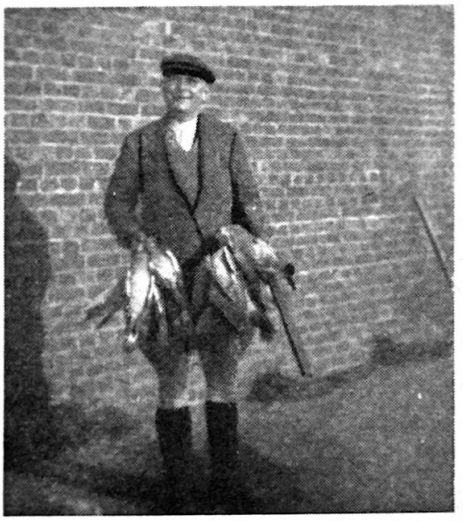
Getting Them On The Move

The hide was soon made with some small oak branches and camouflage netting. There being room in it for only one of my two yellow labrador bitches besides ourselves, the other was requested to lie in a dry ditch alongside. A shot was then fired in the air to get the pigeon on the move.

My host had insisted that I should have first go, a courtesy which I deeply deplored upon the arrival of the one bird that appeared after the shot, for it was a lot higher than I like them. Heartened, however, by the thought that its collapse would bring me much honour and its departure little shame, I let drive. Down it came—dead, but spinning in the wind like a sycamore seed, and fell in the next field, beyond some high palings. The bitch selected for the retrieve galloped off, jumped out over the palings, and brought the bird back over the gate.

That was a good start, I thought, for Jack very kindly praised both the shot and—more important to me—the retrieve. He told me, incidentally, that his beloved bitch Sally (a retriever-setter cross who died a few years ago) used to mark every bird, gallop out immediately it fell, and bring it back as fast. With an average of two thousand pigeon a year she must have had her share of galloping and of double falls to mark.

The next forty-five minutes were spent in discussing pigeon shooting lore and in hearing



Jack the Pigeon Killer.

Jack's account of the various people whom he had taken out decoying. The most distinguished of these (present company, *of course*, excepted !), he said, and one with an impeccable record for markmanship, had been the Belgian Ambassador, who fired only seven shots but killed seven pigeon.

Making A Move

Conversing in a comfortable hide was pleasant enough, but no more pigeon were coming. The hopes raised by those that we had seen upon our arrival were sinking fast. Jack therefore decided to do a quick reconnaissance, leaving me in the hide. During his absence I missed two which appeared after a shot, one fairly easy, the other semi-stratospheric. He returned after twenty minutes with one pigeon and the news that, although he had not found any actually feeding on the peas, he had seen some flighting over the far side of the field. He thought that if there had been any decoys they would have come in. Any pigeon previously flighting along that line would have been invisible to us in our hide.

It was now nearly 4 p.m. and we had to decide whether we should go home, remain where we were for another half-hour or so, or move a couple of hundred yards to that part of the pea-field where he had seen the pigeon flighting. After some hesitation I said that I thought the move worth trying.

We therefore carried off the hide materials, made a new hide, with our backs to the wind once more, against another hedge and ditch, set out the decoys amongst the peas, parked the dogs in the shade behind some long grass fringing the ditch, and leaned back to wait.

The wait was short. Within a few minutes three pigeon swept in to the decoys. Bang, bang ! from Jack—and I thought that he had actually missed with both barrels ! But of course he had not : he had killed with the right, but I did not see the bird go down. The second bird was very lucky; few escaped either barrel.

An Hour of Good Sport

Then followed an hour and a half of the best sport that pigeon over decoys can give. The stream of birds was by no means continuous, but they came often enough to keep us on the alert. We watched them intently as they first appeared, far away, debating whether they would come to us or swing away and pitch, as some did, in a nearby orchard. Though the general direction of their flight was, as always, against the wind, they came to decoys from all angles and from all heights.

Some looked as if they were going to pass by on the right, then suddenly made a right-angle turn and came in : others did the same from the left. Some went well beyond us, then changed their minds and swirled round from behind. Some came in half-right, others half-left. Some crept up very low from straight in front; other came over high, then suddenly closed their wings and dived straight down at us (what more satisfying shot than a diving pigeon taken well out ?) Others again had a look, decided not to come in, and either passed highish overhead, or swung across our front, giving crossing shots from right to lef or *vice versa*.

Though Jack had not fired his gun for several weeks, none of these targets presented much difficulty to him, except, perhaps, a few that came very low. We were standing in a deep, sticky ditch and, being shorter than I, he found that the camouflage netting impeded him when taking the lowest head-on birds. What impressed me, as it had done when I saw him shoot four years ago, was the certainty with which he killed the long shots—and by "long" I mean forty-five to fifty yards. Of course any fool can occasionally knock down a "long" pigeon; it takes an artist to knock them down consistently, and dead, too.

For those who are interested in shot sizes and loads he started with sixes given him by a previous visitor and finished with sevens provided by myself. The size made not the slightest difference. The load in each case was the same—one ounce.

Occasionally the dogs were allowed to retrieve distant birds lying hidden in the peas, while we rearranged the nearer ones on their bellies, head to wind. This interested me because the last time that I had shot with Jack he had carefully put all the dead in a sack and left only the artificial decoys on the ground.

He did not think it mattered, he said, how the dead birds were placed so long as they were on their bellies and roughly head to wind. He believes neither that there is any point in removing their eyelids; nor in the advantage of artificial decoys bobbing about on springs or flapping their wings. I was glad to hear this, having myself always been too lazy to bother about such niceties. He does not even worry about feathers lying on the ground provided there is not a white mass of them in one place.

At 5.45 p.m. we stopped. I had to return to

(Continued on page 550, col. 3)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters and photographs are invited for this page. They should be as brief as possible, and the names and addresses of senders must be given, though these need not necessarily be published. Correspondence should be addressed to The Editor, The Shooting Times & Country Magazine, 29 Old Bond Street, London, W.1. 'Phone: HYDe Park 2556/2557.

DARTMOOR PONIES

Sir,—There has recently been anxiety about Dartmoor ponies, and especially about the circumstances in which many are being exported to Canada. There they are valued as children's riding ponies.

At the same time, it is thought that many of those being sold abroad "in bulk" are only poor quality ponies, half-bred, and likely to get the breed a bad reputation. And some have not been in a fit condition for the long voyage. In at least one shipment 2 mares and 13 foals are said to have died.

The ponies of Dartmoor and Exmoor are not subject to anything like the same road casualties as those of the New Forest. They are not so much fed by motorists and do not haunt the roads; in fact, many are more wild than tame in character.

J.W.,
Somerset.

HUNTING STOATS

Sir,—I thought the following incident worth recording in *The Shooting Times*. I have been gang-mowing now for some time *but* only in young orchards where sheep are not allowed, owing to the low branches.

Anyhow, as I was going to and from in one orchard where the River Tees runs, I came up flush with the water, and as I did so I noticed something brown slip up on the bank the other side.

I thought to myself, "that was a long rat." So I stopped, and I was glad that I did, for I witnessed a "pack" of stoats hunting the honey-combed bank for a water-vole which left in a hurry via the water.

In order to see how many there were, I made the usual noise like a squealing rabbit, and the stoats all met in a bunch on the bank and looked my way. I kept up the squealing, which was too much for the old stoat and four young. The old one then ran into the water and started swimming over until I shouted, and that caused it! She turned round and swam back and vanished with all the family.

Incidentally the rivers and streams round here seem to be over-populated with water-voles. As one sits quietly fishing, they seem to be criss-crossing the water all the way along. I do not like seeing blood-thirsty stoats hunting harmless creatures like the water-vole.

I have come across several broods of partridges of six to ten in a brood, and wild pheasants seem to have hatched out well. Rabbits are in evidence everywhere and as I wend my way between the fruit trees I keep disturbing them. Hares have never been so plentiful. Pigeon are about in large numbers on ripening barley, but it is too hot to shoot, let alone eat them!

JACK COLLINS,
Marden, Kent.

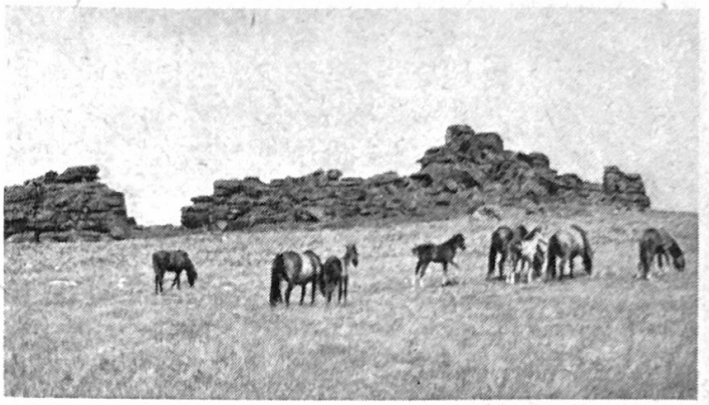
LOFTING DECOYS

Sir, — Regarding "Tower-Bird's" article under the above heading (issue June 22), I had an electrical decoy, but it was never a success in the field owing to faults. I have now made a mechanical decoy "flapper," worked by line, and very successful at 40 yards out. It costs about 2/- or less to make.

This flapper, which is fixed to the body of a wooden decoy by four small wood screws, can be taken off in less than one minute, folded up, and put in a pocket—thus saving carrying difficulties. The wings are made of aluminium.

As to lofty-poles, I made one in 1936 23ft. long with four joints and a friend still has it in use. It was made of first-grade bamboo rods, fitted with ferrules on each joint and bound between every knot in joints like a fishing rod. The top joint just below the decoy had ¼" rod aluminium hook for hanging on to a branch, and also a piece of twine was tied to the decoy in case it came off the pole when lofting. The cost in 1936 was 3/-.

E. W. EASTAFF,
Reading, Berks.



Families of ponies approaching Hounds' Tor. (See letter "Dartmoor Ponies.")

TREE DUCK AND BALLISTICS

Sir,—May I point out to Mr. Muspratt, that he was wrong when he said that the Mauser .30 (7.63mm.) with 85gr. bullet had a velocity of about 1.350 ft. per sec. It has in fact a velocity of 1,420 ft. per sec with 85 or 86gr. bullets. The 357 magnum has a velocity of 1,450 ft. per sec. with Hi-Speed 158gr. bullet.

The new 44 magnum 240 gram bullet has a velocity of 1,570 ft. per second.

D. HANSON,
Sheffield.

FIREARMS ON LICENSED PREMISES

Sir,—I wonder if you could, through your columns, settle a question that has caused me quite a bit of concern over the past few days.

About a week ago, I went out for a couple of hours to hunt some carrion crows, and on making my way home I decided to call in at the local for a drink. I could not leave my gun anywhere outside, so I "broke" it open and walked into the public bar.

Here I was met with some rather caustic remarks from those gathered therein, on my conduct. Some said that I was breaking the law by bringing the gun into a public house at all. Another said that the gun should be taken apart. Still another that it should be left open all the time.

Now, these men were not just leg-pulling, but were quite serious in their view that I was breaking the law. I, on the other hand, maintained that I was not.

If I was in the wrong, then I will gladly stand corrected (and drinks for those concerned), but if it is a case of "bad manners to bring a gun into a public house" then I can only say that I could not leave it on the door-step; that I live a good distance farther on, and that I was in need of a pint after stalking crows all evening.

I would be very grateful if you would give me a straight answer to this rather "legal" question, and it might also help other readers who have had a similar experience. The landlord, by the way, was non-committal.

D. T. AGG,
Broadway, Worcs.

[There is no law expressly forbidding the bringing on to, or keeping of a fire-arm on licensed premises. The landlord has, however, a discretion to order out of his house any person whom he does not consider to be in a fit or proper state. This does not apply only to a person who is intoxicated; it may apply to a person who is misbehaving or acting improperly; or who is unclean, such as a chimney sweep in his dirty working clothes. (Pidgeon v. Legge, 1857).

No doubt a landlord could properly exercise his discretion in the case of a person handling a gun (loaded or unloaded) to the apprehension and consternation of his customers.

It is, of course, an offence contrary to Section 12 of the Licensing Act 1872 for a person in possession of a loaded firearm to be drunk in any public place. —Ed.]

RARE BIRDS ON THE MOVE

Sir, — "Sea-Pie's" article, entitled as above, in the issue June 21, regarding the return of many rare nesting birds to this country, makes one think if many of these so-called rare birds are, in fact, as rare as made out. Concerning fairly large, or large birds it is obvious that a sudden re-appearance would be noticed, but what of the smaller birds?

Taken as a whole in terms of acreage, the British Isles form quite a large area. Would it therefore be wrong to assume that only one in a thousand rare birds of passage are noticed by the right people and recorded? The same also might apply to rare nesting birds. After all, a bird's territory is not so large. No doubt the number of bird-watchers is immense, but are not most of them akin to stamp collectors, only perhaps not having the same amount of evidence.

Seated as I usually am at all times of the year in various forms of hides and reed-beds, I observe many birds, and anything unusual or interesting gets entered in my game book. Some while ago I happened to be chatting to a local ornithologist (and a good one at that) and he asked if he might be allowed to look through it, and he was really amazed at some of the birds entered in it.

Not more than three miles from this large industrial town I have a fairly extensive area of duck marsh with a main road, one of the busiest in England, running a hundred yards

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away from it. On this marsh I have recorded osprey, black tern, godwilt, dunlin, blackback (nesting), garganey (nesting), cormorant, water rail, shoveler (nesting) and white-fronted geese. There is nothing particularly unusual about any of them. Wigeon are common, likewise pochard, tufted, golden-eye and pintail, but when you consider its position — the marsh is only a matter of yards off the suburbs of this city — it makes one wonder what appears on some of the wilder remote marshes in these islands.

Accustomed as I am to the fowling marshes of the west, the sudden appearance some two years ago of a skein of whitefronts came as a pleasant surprise, although they left two behind, which I thought sufficient. The skein eventually departed, obviously making for the snow line in the western counties. One of the birds (the other is still alive in a wildfowl collection) proved to be quite abnormal. Its weight was just under 4½lb.; it had the mandible and frontal patch or blaze of the common whitefront, but showed a clear golden yellow orbital ring. Together with this there were two oval light grey patches on either cheek covert.

I reported the bird to Peter Scott, and whether or not it was a hybrid between *Erythropus* and *Mifrons* is only a matter for conjecture. At the same time I should like to see an article from an expert such as "Sea-Pie" on hybrid waterfowl and waders. I expect "Sea-Pie" will have a laugh at my intentional use of Latin. But I wonder if he knows the following "olde" provincial names of some "waders'" "wildfowl," "seafowl" and "rails," etc.:

Jupcock, Bog Bumper or Bumpy Coss (Halder, Cobbler's Awl or Shoeing Horn), Dorbie-Chur, Elk, Dulwilly (Pirenet or Sly Goose), Mud Plover, Green-legged Horseman, Mother Carey's Chickens, Wynkernel, Whitterick, Tom Harry, Pywipe, Skiddy Cock, Rodge, Plovers Page, Yarwhip, Tommy Cheekie or Norie, and finally Whilk.

FOWLER,
Coventry.

[The answers appear on page 555, col. 3.—Ed.]

STOATS AND RATS

Sir, — "Interested Reader" wrote: "It would not happen with a couple of rats." By this, I take it he means that you would not catch two within a few hours, or a day or so of each other, in the same trap.

My experience is that rats living away from man, in fields and hedgerows, fall just as easily and more often than other vermin to unconcealed traps. The reason for this, I think, is that they are more numerous. Also blood on the trap is a great attraction to them.

Only a few weeks ago I had two 4 inch traps set to a dead rabbit lying under the bottom rail of a fence. On visiting them, I found a full-grown rat in each.

Most ground vermin—foxes, stoats, weasels, cats — are attracted by the cry of the rabbit and can be decoyed into range by imitating this cry.

The stoat's insatiable curiosity (where rabbits are its chief food) makes it the most easy of running vermin to fall victim to "squealing." But I would not say that it works every time. Like Mr. Imrie, I have seen many stoats that were not deceived by this trick.

To give one instance — I know it would not work on one running in the hedge after being bolted from a rabbit burrow by a ferret.

You make it sound so easy, "Interested Reader." I think those fellows who walk the fields and woods with their heads down, and are called keepers, strike the right note many a time; yet stoats are not rare, nor even scarce. I, myself, have shot five carrion crows and one magpie brought into range by imitating the squealing of a rabbit.

H.M.,
Mansfield, Notts.

HARES AND GAME LICENCES

Sir,—Will you please settle a controversy.

I believe that to shoot a hare one has to hold a game licence. My friend does not agree with me.

Who is correct?

D. E. BELL.
Gravesend, Kent.

[Under the Games Licences Act, 1860, the general rule is that a game licence must be held by anyone who goes hare shooting. The exceptions are (a) Under the Hares Act, 1848, any person in actual occupation of enclosed land or any owner thereof may himself or by any person authorised in writing by him, take and kill any hare without having a game licence. Only one person can so be authorised at a time. Firearms may not be used at night. This Act since 1880 is virtually obsolete. (b) Under the Ground Game Act, 1880, the *occupier* himself and certain persons by him authorised pursuant to the provisions of the Act may take and kill hares without having in force a game licence. Only one person in addition to himself may be authorised to kill hares with firearms. The authority for this person must be in writing. Firearms may not be used at night. Under both these Acts, although a game licence is not needed, a gun licence under the Gun Licence Act, 1870, is necessary if a gun is used. Under the Game Licences Act, 1860, no licence need be held by persons who hunt or course hares with hounds.—Ed.]

BIRMINGHAM GUN CLUB

Sir, — For some little time now it has been under consideration to find a new site for our club activities. While we are reluctant to leave our present address at Brockhill Lane, Hewell, used by kind permission of the Grange Gun Company, it was felt that if the club wanted to be in a position to accept further members and also to put on more ambitious open competitive shoots, a larger site was necessary.

Since its inception, the Birmingham Gun Club has made considerable progress, but it is felt that there must be many more people in this area who are interested in clay shooting and would join us if all the facilities usually offered by a club were available.

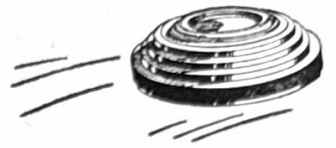
Our new headquarters at Lower Park Farm, Rowney Green, Alvechurch, near Birmingham, will be very easy to find. It is only 12 miles from Birmingham (city centre) Redditch-Birmingham A441, and about 5 miles from its south-west suburbs. There is ample space for two skeet and one down-the-line layouts, clubhouse, etc., plenty of room for cars with hard road access. Water and electricity are available, so in all I am confident that this club will, in the very near future, be taking its place along with some of the other premier gun clubs of this country and on open competitive days attract many of those well-known shooters who so far have not yet been to see us, as well as further members.

Any information readers would like concerning the Birmingham Gun Club can be obtained from me, but please will they note that it would be better to write to me as the address given here is a business address and it is rather difficult to contact me, unless, of course, an appointment is made.

A. E. JOHNSON,
Hon. Sec. Birmingham Gun Club,
33 Alcester St., Redditch.

CLAY PIGEON SHOOTING

THE SIXTEENTH OPEN
SKEET
CHAMPIONSHIP
OF GREAT BRITAIN



will be held under the auspices of the Clay Pigeon Shooting Association at the
BEDFORD & DISTRICT GUN CLUB'S SHOOTING GROUNDS
Adjoining the London Brick Company's Works at Elstow, on the main Bedford-Ampthill Road (2 miles from the centre of Bedford) on

SATURDAY, JULY 20, 1957 at 9.30 a.m.

Intending competitors should return their entry forms to:
The Hon. Secretary, The Clay Pigeon Shooting Association,
276 Whitchurch Lane, Edgware, Middlesex
to arrive not later than Monday, July 15th

COVENTRY & DISTRICT GUN CLUB
BRANDON ROAD - BINLEY - COVENTRY
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WARWICKSHIRE SKEET and D.T.L. CHAMPIONSHIPS
will be held on 14th JULY, 1957, at the Club's Grounds

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WARWICKSHIRE D.T.L.—50 Birds in 2 Stages of 25
Also Novice 10 Birds D.T.L. and 5 Pairs of Doubles

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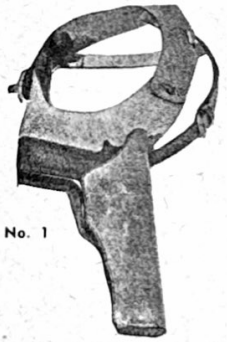

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Belt Holster and Belt. Carved as No. 2	£12.12.0
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Double Draw Holsters and Belt to quotation	Prices on application
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Wings for above, or lofting pigeon (Reg. No. 876396) 12/3
Post 6d. or Orders for six post free

Whole Pigeon without spring and peg (for lofting) 12/3
Lofting Pigeon
By means of two screw eyes screwed into the body top and bottom a cord can be attached with weight such as stick and thrown over a branch, the decoy then can be hoisted up into the required position.

Checks and Challenges

by W. H. Fuller

IT has always appeared to me that there is some misunderstanding at Open Small-bore Meetings as to what action, if any, a competitor may take if he thinks that he has been credited with an incorrect score. Actually the procedures are very simple, so simple that they can be divided into two clear-cut forms, one following on from the other. First there is the *check* and this can be followed by the *challenge*.

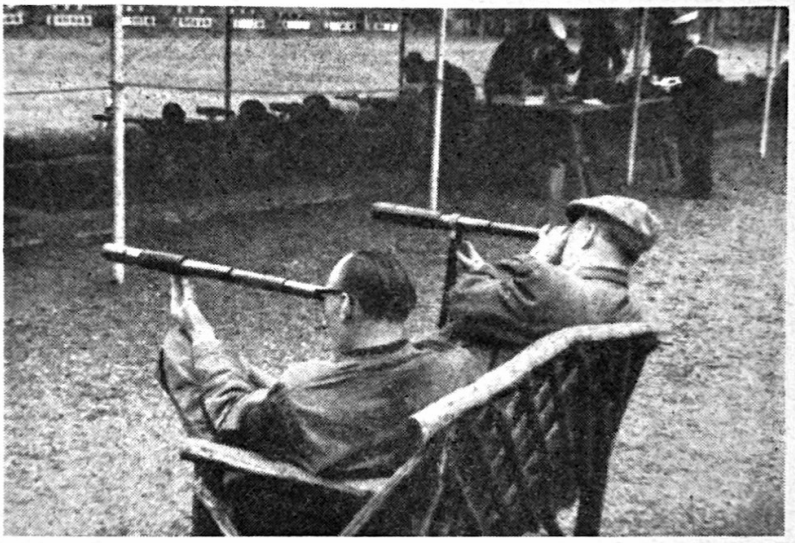
You, or anyone else, may ask the recording officer or one of his clerks to check your score and this will be done without the deposit of the notorious and contentious shilling. The recorder will check that the score written on the target card by the statistical officer has been correctly transcribed on to the recording card; that this figure has been correctly placed to the credit of the competitor on the right recording card and that the total, totals and the aggregates have been correctly summed. This request for a check covers clerical errors only and if such are pointed out should they be noticed and without a modicum of chipping the recorder will thank you for doing so. But it is important that you should know that in asking for a check you are not permitted to handle or even to see your card.

As a matter of interest, the recorder is not permitted to alter the score written on the card by the stats' officer, even if there is a most obvious error. Queries which affect the target card are the province of the stats' officer and his only. Should the clerk in handling the card to check the figure see what he thinks is an error, he will on his own volition refer the card to the stats' officer who will or will not modify the score according to his decision or ruling. Under these circumstances he will generally initial the card to indicate that it has been referred to him. If he has time he may even take the trouble to see you and either apologise for the error or explain why a deduction has been made. Generally however, stats' is a very busy man, and the explanation will be made through the recorder or his assistant. But it is worth remembering that if a check only is needed or an explanation for a deduction required then it will cost you nothing. It is all part of the service and in any case you cannot challenge the recorder.

Issuing a Challenge

If after making a request for a check you are not satisfied and wish to take the matter further then you issue a challenge to the stats' officer. A challenge is best made through the recorder for he will by then have all the gen at his finger tips having already found the card you questioned and whereas he has access to the stats' officer, you have not. But before you do so think it over. First get all your facts marshalled and make sure that they are facts and not assumptions. Check your firing-point records and your remaining unshot tickets. Check also your concurrent shooting and if you had an unlimited ticket on the card at the same time. If you can fix the approximate time at which the card was shot this may help the staff to find the card more quickly. If the Wicken's Competitors Card system is being used there will be no need for you to collect all these details for all such information will be on the Range Registers and they can be flicked through in a matter of seconds. If you did shoot concurrently then check the other recording sheets to see if the same score has been credited on both cards. If they differ, simply refer the matter to the recorder and point out the discrepancy. Having got all your facts together tell the recorder that you wish to challenge a certain score.

At some meetings the recorder collects the shilling and will not refer the matter to the stats' officer until you pay. At others, you pay the stats' officer when he calls you in.



Armchair critics at the last London Open.

Now let there be full understanding of what the shilling entitles you to and what it does not. The shilling is a deposit which you forfeit if the stats' officer is right and which is returned to you should he be wrong. The shilling deposit covers the re-examination of one card only, the card you challenge. It does not entitle you to have all your cards turned out. The stats' officer is perfectly entitled to demand a deposit for every card he has to search for and re-examine. And do, please, bear in mind that the shilling is not a wager. It is demanded to stop "Eager Ernies" wanting to check every card they have shot at the meeting. So before you make a challenge make sure that you are on the right card. Have all your facts ready and know exactly what you are going to claim.

And when you appear before the stats' officer, let there be no beating about the bush. Let there be no hum-ing and ha-ing about it. Let there be no chippery, wise-cracking or attempted skulduggery. He has seen your kind before. If you have the temerity to question the accuracy of his scoring, his experience and ability then for goodness sake have the courage of your audacity. Plonk your shilling on his table and take your hand off it. Remember that you deposit the shilling as a search and re-examination fee and you are not entitled to see your card before you do so. And that simply means that you are not permitted to have a quick peep at your card to see whether it is worth having a go or not. Do not argue about this. It is quite definite. Neither are you allowed to handle your card or to touch the gauge if the stats' officer has inserted one to complete your undoing. Some stats' officers will offer the card to you so that you can get a better light on it, but they need not do so, neither can you demand it.

Make It Short

Cut the cackle. A stats' officer at an Open Meeting is a busy and may be a very harrassed man. Your party piece, comic turn or what you may think is the latest funny story will not affect his judgement in the slightest, neither will it help you very much over the embarrassing half-minute you are going to have when you find how right he is. He knows from past experience how many challenges succeed and they are very, very few. The sickly grin he greets you with when you first enter his office or his tent should not be construed other than as a polite invitation to enter his clutches. Actually he will not be particularly pleased to see you, although he will not mind losing, that is if he does, which is unlikely, and it is as well to remember that there is nothing personal about that shilling. It does not go into his pocket as is so often thought, but into the general fund for that meeting and has to be accounted for.

But a challenge is a nuisance to him. It stops the orderly run of scoring targets and checking backing cards. It breaks the continuity of the work and if you are responsible for building up a back schedule, he will not thank you for doing that. And always take in an exact shilling with you. I do not think it is quite the right thing to "sauce the gent" and expect him to find change as well.

So make no bones about it. Have a look at your card, admit his superiority, even if you keep it to yourself, thank him if you can force yourself to it, actually he will not expect it, and then get out. Do not just stand there as if you cannot believe the evidence of your own eyes. Do not hang round or regale him with what "it looked like through the 'scope," or suggest that his idea of what is not touching differs from yours. It *is* different, there is no doubt about that, but he has both the experience and the rule book on his side. It is occasionally worth a shilling to be reminded that a stats' officer is far better equipped to value a shot-hole by reason of his gauge and magnifier, plus the very simple and elementary but often overlooked fact, that whereas you "estimated" the "exact" position of a shot when it was a hundred yards away he did it when it was within six inches of his hawk-like eye.

Now do not let the foregoing put you off from ever making a challenge. No stats' officer is infallible and no one is more aware of it than himself. The more experienced he is the more is he aware of how easily he can make a slip. But stats' do make mistakes and if you feel sure that you have been credited with a score lower than you anticipated then by all means go ahead and make the challenge. There are certain things which can occur to get you marked up with a lower score, such as an incorrectly loaded frame, range boys sticking tickets on the wrong cards or a target frame put up at the butts upside down, so that although you shoot at the target under your

correct number, you get someone else's score and he gets yours. Strangely enough this particular error on the part of the range boys can only be discovered by one, any one, of the three or four competitors involved making a challenge. In these cases it is usual for the stats' officer to call the competitors involved together, get their agreements on who shot which cards and from thence get the records into line. So if you feel sure that a mistake has been made do not hesitate to make a challenge.

Not Worth the Risk

The kind of challenge I should personally hesitate to make are those concerned with squeekers and double shot-holes. If you cannot clearly see that your shot is touching the line through a 'scope my advice is not to risk a shilling on it. If it was a doubtful one to you it will be a doubtful one to the stats' officer and he will be certain to have had a gauge in it. However if you feel that you have been hard-done-by invest a shilling in your confidence and have a go. But do not make a habit of it. You will be sure to lose next time.

And it is a good idea to go it alone. The fewer the people you have to share your embarrassment with the better. Stats' can only deal with one person at a time and if two or three friends join you at the party you are only delaying matters generally by involving him in a multi-sided discussion in which he will not be a willing participant. There are, however, departures which are permitted from all rules, ethical or otherwise and I think it would be helpful if a junior was accompanied by a senior, just to show him the ropes and just how it is done and what a silly habit it is and the sooner he gets out of challenging stats' officers the better it will be for his pocket money.

A facility which is not generally operated but which should be, is that any person, other than the competitor can challenge a card, provided of course that he deposits the shilling. This facility could justifiably be employed by a captain looking after the interests of his team but I know of one case where a card was challenged, quite legally, by an individual who succeeded in getting a point knocked off an opponent's score. What he *really* got out of it in the end I do not know and somehow I do not think I would be the right person to ask him.

I did intend to head this paragraph—A Final Indiscretion, but when things reach this stage the mild levity of some of my previous comments will have to be suppressed. Having seen the stats' officer and lost, and you still feel that you are not getting a square deal then you have a further recourse, an appeal to a range committee. Such an appeal can be made verbally, although it is better to make it in writing giving all the facts, or rather a precis of the facts. This should be handed to the secretary of the meeting as early as possible and in any case before the meeting closes. This is important for it is a rule of all Open Meetings and all programmes carry a note to this effect —that scores cannot be queried after the close of the meeting. Meetings officially close at the latest time for shooting.

Range Committees

Now it takes a lot of one of two kinds of attitude or reasons to invoke a range committee. You are either genuinely and quite honestly dissatisfied with the stats' officer's ruling or you have the heck of a neck and are trying to pull a fast one. Make quite sure that you are not subscribing to the last. You do not have to pay anything more than your original shilling which is still on deposit in the office. But somehow there is a feeling in my mind that I would prefer to trust the decision of an experienced stats' officer, particularly after having made a challenge and lost, rather than those of a committee who may or may not be in the same category. In any case, the individuals who are likely to comprise a range committee would be drawn from the organiser's general committee which would have appointed the stats' officer in the first place. I do not suggest that they would be biassed but there can be little doubt that they were confident that they were appointing the right man, a man who could and would do the job better than they could. I may be wrong, but this attitude of mine would be particularly effective if I were concerned in a case relating to a squeeker or a double shot hole.

When It Is Worth It

However, circumstances could arise where the target would have little to do with the decision. A range officer could disqualify a card or one shot on it for a supposed breach of rule on the firing point, which when more detailed facts were made available, might not be upheld by a range committee. In fact there are a number of ways in which a competitor would be fully justified in asking for reconsideration through a range committee. A competition ticket, insecurely stuck to a card, might get lost and in such cases the competitor should exercise his right of appeal even if the only result is the maintenance of the principle. It means a lot of trouble to get people together and organise a range committee especially when everyone is getting ready to go home, but if it ensures that the competitor goes away with the knowledge that he has had a fair hearing, that is far better than that he should leave the meeting with a grouse and the probability of not coming again.

☆ ☆ ☆

Full-Bore Frustration

by Tyro

IN common with many shooters of my age I was introduced to .303 shooting during my National Service. However, as a member of the unit team I was given much more opportunity for shooting .303 than most N.S. men. In fact, I may say that due to compulsory evening practice, during which we fired up to 60 rounds each, and Saturday morning team shoots, I fired more rounds than does many a .303 shooter in a large number of seasons. But I remained, in my own mind, convinced of the superiority of .22 shooting as a sport, and could not become enamoured of this "big bang" stuff. Let me say at once that this attitude was not due to poor results; on the contrary I made quite a few individual triumphs and shot on several winning teams, but because the game seemed so hidebound. Due to Service conditions we had no choice of rifle, ammunition, dress, etc., but when shooting .22 we could more or less please ourselves.

Some time near the end of my Service career I decided that I would like to continue shooting full-bore, but on my own terms, and decided that the Nos. 1, 3, 4, etc., were not for me. I wanted a rifle I could rely on to shoot well under all conditions, and not waste my life packing, bedding, adjusting, etc., as I have seen so many .303 experts doing. Nor was I particularly interested in competition shooting—I got plenty of that with my .22. All I wanted was to have built an accurate rifle I could take to the range when club shoots were in progress, stick up a target and shoot away to my heart's content.

But what a disappointment was in store. I wanted a good really heavy barrel and action, a heavy target type stock, and sights similar to those on my .22. A few trade inquiries showed that these things were not to be had and if I could persuade anyone to make them they would cost the earth; this in a country which prides itself on the high quality of its arms. Besides, what ammunition was I going to use in my built up rifle? To give the accuracy I was after it appeared that the only thing available was I.C.I. Streamline —again costing the earth. To crown everything a final snag appeared. While talking over this project with several dyed in the wool .303 experts they, with one accord, flung up their arms and told me that if I did get my dream rifle I would never be allowed to use it on the W.D. range my club uses for .303 shooting. Faced with this "thou shalt not" attitude I gave up all hope of my shooting full-bore and have concentrated on .22.

However, while relating this tale to several competitors at National and county meetings I have been surprised to find that a large number of small-bore shooters share my views, and would also shoot full-bore if allowed the same latitude in arms and equipment as they are when shooting .22. Many would also like to use 'scope sights, but the less said about them the better. From these experiences I have come to the conclusion that there must be a large number of .22 shooters who would like to shoot this type of full-bore rifle if allowed to.

Is it vain to hope that the situation may change? The introduction of the B.S.A. Mauser type rifles appears to provide a basis for *really accurate* full-bore shooting. Fitted with a really heavy barrel, target type stock and good sights we would probably have a very good rifle, and with .222 Rem., 7mm. and other ammunition now available wonderful results should be possible, and how the .22 shooters would like this type of rifle. Think of the fun they could have bedding stocks, fitting tube sights, tinkering with the actions and so forth. But above all what a tremendous boost would be given to the declining sport of full-bore (would not the American term Hi-Power be better?) shooting if the field was opened to allow us to enter the hidebound ranks of the body which rules .303 shooting.

The result of such a policy would without a doubt be to raise standards all round. The leader "World Target Missed" in this journal on June 28 shows that we must take some steps such as this to regain our lost position in world championships and prestige.

Riflemen who wish
to
BUY, SELL or EXCHANGE
Shooting Equipment
should study and make use of our classified columns.
6d. per word

Lore of the Land

by John Muers Raby

IT now seems as certain as anything can be in this uncertain world that the 1957 hay crop will be light and of no more than medium quality in most parts of the country. For as I write (June 11) the drought has barely been broken by the few hours of rain which fell at Whitsuntide, and the grass has bolted away to seed, leaving little of the leaf or "bottom" which makes both for bulk and quality. Despite the fact that many people have already cut I have nowhere seen what I would really call a crop. But the fine weather will at least ensure that what does go into the barn is well made. Providing, that is, that matters are not too rushed; a temptation in perfect weather which often results in more hot ricks than occur in a wet season.

It has been a frustrating time for farmers in that whilst we had ideal conditions for the actual operation of haymaking, few had any grass worth cutting. For myself I am not yet unduly worried. For the first time almost in living memory we have a reasonable carry-over of hay, not to mention a considerable stock of silage which we were forced to make last year to circumvent the bad haying weather. Some of the hay, made in the most difficult conditions of 1956, has turned out to be of surprisingly high quality. For which I must render unto Caesar, etc., and give due credit to my staff for their skill and enthusiasm.

But as I have so often pointed out on this page most set-backs in farming are offset by some compensating factor. Most years at this time the roots have to compete for labour with the pressing demands of hay and silage making, the result being that they are never as clean as I should like to see them. This year, with the hoes going undisturbed, and dry weather to check rejuvenation of the weeds, we shall have no excuse if we cannot show a really clean field of roots. It so happens that such a satisfactory state of affairs is particularly desirable this year, for our roots lie bordering the farm drive, fully exposed to the critical eye of all comers.

Hay baling. There will be few crops like this in 1957.

Fly Discussion

Whilst staying for a few days recently in a West Country fishing pub, the inevitable discussion concerning flies arose in the bar one evening. I do not rate myself as a fisherman of sufficient skill or experience to pronounce on such weighty questions as to how far a fish is deceived by an artificial reproduction of a known species, etc., etc., but I am always intrested to listen to the views of those who are. The two extremes were represented that evening by a guest who fishes always and everywhere with a Coch-y-bondhu, whatever the conditions (I am talking of dry fly fishing, of course) and another who always takes a butterfly net to the river in an endeavour to identify the particular hatch of the moment. In the result there seemed to be little to choose between these two men —they both returned regularly with good average catches.

Most of us, I should say, came between these two schools: if one fly fails we probably try another, but it was generally agreed that if the new fly takes a couple of fish, it is not irrefutable evidence that the fish are deceived into believing that it is what it purports to be. In my own humble experience there appears to be no rule of thumb. If there is a pronounced hatch of a fly on which feeding fish are concentrating, then they will probably not accept anything which does not resemble that fly, but for the odd fish which one has located and is trying to tempt one apparently palatable morsel, correctly presented in the right place, seems to succeed as well as another. But where the one-fly man reduces operations to an almost boring simplicity, the butterly netter seems to me to make a complicated and serious business of the whole thing. Personally I fish entirely for pleasure—and fish, of course!

Another fact emerging from this discussion which seemed strange to me was that the dry Coachman is frowned upon on these waters, the reason being that it is an imitation of no known fly. Well, blow me down! If I am clever enough to drop a Coachman, or anything else, on the nose of a trout in such a way as to induce it to take, I consider that that achievement cancels out any entomological unorthodoxy or ignorance of the fish. But I may be on dangerous ground propounding such heresies, if heresies they be, in a journal which now caters for the hundred per cent serious fisherman.

Of one thing, however, I am quite certain, and I should be surprised if *any* angler disagreed: such arguments provide splendid entertainment of an evening, and as larynxes become dry with a rapidity found nowhere else, business for these excellent hostelries increases, with benefit to all concerned. But it always makes me wonder what people who neither farm, fish, nor shoot find to talk about. Hunting presumably.

The Show Season

The show season is with us again, and our first time out proved something a fiasco. With four animals on parade we returned home with six rosettes! This occurred at our very local show, a mere half-mile down the road. It would be satisfactory to rate the quality of our exhibits as being commensurate with the result, but in actual fact our success was due mainly to a very poor turnout, numerically, in our particular breed. Under normal conditions we might have collected two or three awards, but we certainly had no business to walk off with the Championship and Reserve Championship of the breed. (Since writing this the two animals responsible took second prizes in their respective classes at the Royal Counties Show, which is very much nearer the correct answer.) But I mention this incident because this sort of thing poses a tricky problem for the pedigree breeder. Is it worth the trouble and expense of showing at a small local show in an area where one's particular breed is thin on the ground?

Valuable Experience

Despite the fact that an element of farce sometimes intrudes I think the answer must be in the affirmative. If a breed is to make headway publicity is important, and the showground is the best place in which to show the flag. Further, one should support one's local show to the best of one's ability, for a lot of people take a good deal of trouble to make it a success. In this particular case I believe such a policy will pay off in the future, for enormous progress has been achieved in respect of the show since the war, and there is reason to believe that it may be one of the up-and-coming one-day shows in Southern England.

Taking the more practical and personal view, coming at the very beginning of the show season as it does, it provides useful experience for both men and animals who are to go on later to the more important events. Lastly, but not to be ignored, is the fact that my herdsman approves. Prize money is traditionally a herdsman's perk, and it is nice to see him have a clean up when the probability is that leaner times are ahead at the bigger shows.

A Day with Jack Collins

(Continued from page 545)

Sussex and he to a Whitsun party in Marden. I took the dogs to the orchard where three or four wounded birds had pitched. They collected two dead on the ground, and then we counted the bag — thirty-three. Had we been able to stay another two hours or so I am sure we should have at least doubled that figure; the longer we stayed the better they came.

On the way to Marden Jack stopped to leave some pigeon for his friend who had told us where they were feeding, and for the manager of the farm.

And as I motored back to Sussex I mused on what an astonishing day it had been. To think that during my drive over to Marden, during my picnic on its outskirts, and during our long reconaissance only two pigeon had been seen; that we had heard of their whereabouts through a chance roadside meeting; that, even so, after spending an hour under a practically pigeon-less sky, we had almost decided to give it up. And then, as the result of moving our hide a mere two hundred yards, we had found the sky no longer pigeon-less and had enjoyed a splendid ninety minutes—all this, surely, is typical of the uncertainty of pigeon shooting which forms the largest slice of its unfailing fascination.

A sunfish weighing more than a hundredweight has been landed at Coverack, Cornwall, the first seen there since 1929. Fishermen say the presence of the fish in Cornish waters is a sign of good weather for months to come.

The sunfish, caught by two fishermen after an hour's struggle two miles off-shore, measures about 3ft. across and is a foot thick.

GUN GOSSIP

by North Country

"THE danger of an automatic does not lie in the gun itself but in the man behind it." This was written in a letter to the editor by P. A. Wilkinson of Suffolk. In those few words really lies the answer to the whole case of the automatic or repeater. An automatic of any kind is a good weapon technically for the right user. It shoots well, it functions efficiently, it wears well and it will, if need be, stand up to a great deal of rough usage—such as may be expected under wildfowling conditions. Its disadvantage, however, is that where more than two cartridges are handled, the irresponsible type of shooter (of whom there are plenty) can show up at his worst. I almost shudder to think what some of the fellows I have seen, armed with ordinary singles or doubles, would be guilty of with an auto, or repeater. And to show you the kind of thing which may be done by the wrong sort of person with a gun I remember the case of a smallholder, as long ago now as the *summer* of 1919, who shot a fox in the heart of a famous hunting country and who, on being remonstrated with by the local M.F.H., said he was really sorry about it but when he fired he thought it was a pheasant. Now of course he could have done this with any kind of gun. Yet what would he be likely to do with a covey of partridges and a five-shot automatic?

I know too of a case where a covey was almost entirely wiped out on the ground in late August—near enough the opening date for business purposes! Such trigger-happy people are best limited in their fire power, if they cannot be stopped altogether. They are a menace in any game-preserving district and the bane of a keeper—especially in pigeon-populated districts where odd shots may frequently be heard without being suspect at any time of day. But unless prices can be made much lower than those for plain double non-ejectors, I do not see that any great change in sales may be anticipated. The *big* market today is to be found in guns costing fifty or sixty pounds. It will become much bigger when prices go down.

New Forest Game

Last month, motoring in the New Forest, I was disappointed that I saw so little game. I may be doing the region an injustice, but I couldn't help thinking how heavy must seem the price of a special licence to shoot there (£30) from October to January on certain days of the week. Of course I cannot lay claim to any *intimate* knowledge of the Forest — which I presume is necessary in order to make full use of an annual licence. But the *impression* I got was one of vast quantities of crows, magpies, gulls etc. There seemed to be no pigeon about and I never saw any trace of a rabbit—I thought I might see a few. I did see a couple of fallow deer crossing a ride in an enclosure and a cock pheasant (in the space of a fortnight). A fascinating and lovely place, I should like to hear more of it and its possibilities from any who may have shot there. Needless to say nobody is going to give away his pet "hunting" ground. But it would be encouraging to know that some reasonable return may be expected as a reward for hard work, knowledge of woodcraft and fair gun handling. I was informed, by the way, by some sort of forest worker that deer are shot in parts of the Forest with guns and buck shot! "But why are not rifles used?" I asked. "That would not be safe for fellows like us," came the reply. I should have thought it would be far more dangerous for motorists!

As the population of this already far overpopulated Island continues to increase and the roads become more and more congested with traffic (and there seems no escape from this), it seems to me that the future of the rifle shooting of game is bound to be fraught with increasing difficulties. Scotland and a few districts of Northern England may be excepted, but elsewhere a "chill wind" seems to be blowing. Bullets from all but the lowest-powered rifles travel too far for most of our conditions and the answer is hard to find. Yet safety comes first and its requirements must be jealously guarded and preserved.

There is even increased danger in the *occasional* use of buck-shot or lettered shot. The trouble may be found in the fact that a shooter may forget what he is using and its longer range potentialities. A bullet is a bullet—and at once commands respect. A loose charge of shot, however, is apt to be regarded as just another charge with a very limited range! But in reality such large pellets are capable of damage enough—where background has not been properly assessed.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

Fixture List

July 12: South East England D.T.L. Championship, St. Erne, Cornwall (postponed from June 15).
July 13: Bisley G.C., Brookwood, Surrey. Open event. 2 p.m. (visitors welcome).
July 13: Waltham Abbey G.C. Open Shoot. 1 p.m.
July 13: Leicestershire Skeet Championship, Leicester and District G.C., Blaby, 1 p.m.
July 13: Wetherby and District G.C. Members' Shoot.
July 13: Bisley G.C. Event during National Rifle Association Meeting. 2 p.m.
July 13: Impens, North Newton, Somerset. Down-the-Line. Open and Novice classes. Gunmakers' Association Competition for Novices. 11 a.m.
July 14: North of England 100-Bird "Handicap by Distance," Harrogate Gun Club. 2 p.m.
July 14: Royal Oak C.P.C., Cratemans Farm, Cowfold, Sussex. D. T. L. and D/Rise. 10.30 a.m.
July 14: Hayfield G.C., near Stockport. Members' Shoot.
July 14: Warwickshire D. T. L. and Skeet Championships, Coventry and District D. & G.C., Brandon Road, Binley. 2 p.m.
July 15: West Sussex G.C., Goodwood, Chichester. Skeet Practice. 6.30 p.m.
July 15-20: Daily Clay Pigeon Shooting events and practice (except Sunday, July 14), National Rifle Association's 88th Annual Prize Meeting, Bisley Camp, Brookwood, Woking, Surrey. Special additional events for Public School boys, July 22-24.
July 18: Deer's Leap G.C., Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leics. 6.30 p.m.
July 19: Childrey C.P.S.C., The Plough, Little Coxwell, Faringdon, Berks. Club Shoot. 6 p.m.
July 20: Blackpool G.C. Open Shoot. Class A and B.
July 20: East Riding of Yorkshire D.T.L. Championship, Pocklington G.C. 2 p.m.
July 20: 16th British Open Skeet Championship, Bedford and District Gun Club, Ampthill Road, Elstow, Bedford.
July 21: Beverley and District G.C., Yorks. Members' Shoot. 2 p.m.
July 22-24: Public School Boys' Events, N.R.A., Bisley Camp, Brookwood, Surrey.
July 24: Cambridge G.C., Club Championship Shoot. 4.30 p.m.
July 24: Birmingham G.C., Brockhill Lane, Redditch. 6.30 p.m.
July 24: Cavendish G.C., Forest Town, Notts. 6.30 p.m.
July 25: Silloth Sports Clay Pigeon Shoot.
July 25: Bedford and District G.C., Elstow. Practice.
July 25: Carlisle and District G.C., Silloth Sports Clay Pigeon Shoot.
July 27: Southern Counties Skeet Championship, 80 birds.
July 27: Waltham Abbey G.C. Members' Shoot, Essex. 2 p.m.
July 27: Bowland and District G.C., nr. Clitheroe, Lancs. Open Cup Shoot.

Mr. E. R. Bruce, of Scotland, being presented with the Open Championship Trophy by Mrs. Watson, wife of the president of the Scottish C.P.S.A.

July 27: Ulster Double-Rise Championship, Banbridge G.C., Ulster C.P.S.A.
July 27: Hayfield G.C., Derbyshire. Members' Shoot. 2 p.m.
July 28: North of England Sporting Championship, Harrogate G.C., Yorks.
July 28: Royal Oak C.P.C., Cratemans Farm, Cowfold, Sussex. Skeet. 10.30 a.m.

* * *

Reports and Results

A strong wind blew the clays about at **Hayfield Gun Club** shoot on Saturday, June 15, but in spite of that, quite a large number of birds were broken by the fifteen guns who were present.

"A" Class spoon was won by R. J. Padfield but Dr. D. Burton and S. Gaskell had to shoot-off for "B" spoon, which finally went to the latter. Shoot-offs were necessary for all the individual events, which were eventually decided as follows: Down-the-Line, S. B. Wilson; Skeet, G. Blackhurst; Partridges, R. W. Lomas; Pheasants, J. Shrigley; Grouse, J. Watson.

Extra 20 Skeet went to Messrs. G. Blackhurst, S. Gaskell and S. B. Wilson, and 10 Down-the-Line to Messrs. V. Harrison and R.W. Lomas.

Wildfowl in Canada

Broods are "popping out all over" according to *The Duckological* of Ducks Unlimited (Canada). This applies to duck and geese in all three provinces. Indications are that a good first hatch, comparable to that of 1952, is coming off. Systematic brood counts will be made later but right now, with a flying start, mallard and pintail—the earliest nesters—are showing up with hefty broods in daily increasing numbers. The early start—one to two weeks earlier than last year—has helped the birds in many districts to beat the destructive agricultural summer fallowing. In the Strathmore district of southern Alberta, the incubating pintail got a break for a reason new to our experience. The dry weather delayed the sprouting of wild oats so the farmers held off cultivating until the wild oats were up and could be destroyed. This was a real break for the pintail which are prone to nest in the stubble much more so than the canny mallard.

Surface water conditions have continued to deteriorate in the southern sections of all three provinces, but the birds largely bypassed the dangerous areas to concentrate in the safer, well-watered central and parkland areas. Scattered throughout the dried-up areas are permanent lakes, rivers and man-made impoundments, including the irrigation districts, and nearly 200 D.U. projects which were designed and located to meet the onset of drought. They are heavily populated with breeding duck and are paying fine dividends.

Fisherman's Diary

by Coridon

LOUGH NEAGH, the largest sheet of water in the British Isles, is a lake so vast that angling in it has never become a really popular pastime. It is easier to find concentrations of fish in the estuaries of the rivers which flow into this inland sea and in the rivers themselves than in the open and featureless expanses.

In addition to normal brown trout the lough supports three varieties of trout known collectively as dollaghan ; and the exceptionally rich feeding of the lake bed induces in these fish a truly abnormal rate of growth. They can grow to 12lb. or so in weight and the average for rod-caught dollaghan is estimated to be 6lb.

They run up the rivers, and it is in the course of such runs that most dollaghan are caught. In very early seasons the run has started as early as mid-July, but generally it begins late in the month, continuing through August and into September, the actual time of the runs differing with the kinds of trout, the rivers, and—above all—the rainfall.

The earliest runners are the pollan trout, smallest of the three dollaghans, but still capable of reaching 7 or 8lb. Next come the boddagh, deep-bodied, heavily built trout ; and then the black boddagh, heaviest of the lot and very dark fish indeed. These may still be running when the season closes at the end of September.

There is dollaghan fishing to be had in all the lough's deeper rivers, but two important early ones are the Moyola and Ballinderry. Later runs occur on the Blackwater and the Maine.

I suppose the Lough Neagh rivers are the only ones in the British Isles where an angler can expect to catch trout of eight pounds or so on fly not as a headline-making exception but as a general rule.

Any angler spending a holiday within reach of the dollaghan rivers during the next eight weeks should really try to arrange a day or two on one of them. The fish will be there, they take fly and spinners, and big though they are they have lost none of their fighting power. The only snag is that the weather must be right. Low river conditions are useless. The water must be above average height, and anything from that stage to the first drop after a full flood is ideal.

Notes From U.S.A.

I saw in a recent issue of *The Fishing Tackle Dealer* a note to the effect than in 1955 the American Association of Fishing Tackle Manufacturers carried out an investigation through the national schools with the object of finding out how many wanted to start classes in angling. As the note says : "The results rather startled the Americans, who are accustomed to thinking in astronomical figures. No less than 4,560,000 children were provisionally enrolled."

No doubt some will fall by the wayside, but others will grow up to take their places. If one half the enrolments turn into confirmed anglers the tackle manufacturers are on a good thing. A couple of million customers for life is worth some expenditure and organisation.

Whether it is a good or not so good scheme ethically is a matter for individual opinion. It will undoubtedly produce technically efficient anglers. Producing anglers with the right mental attitude towards the sport is a more difficult matter.

Angling interests in the United States are part of the business of the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the individual States have similar organisations. Together they wield considerable power, as is shown by the decision of the voters of Oregon, who by a 3 to 1 majority last November banned all commercial salmon fishing in the waters of the State south of the Columbia River.

Incidentally, a current 3-cent United States postage stamp depicts a salmon leaping a fall, with the heading, "Wildlife Conservation."

New Periodical

The Fishing Tackle Dealer, to which I referred in the previous note, is a newcomer to journalism connected with angling. The first issue of this 24-page art paper monthly appeared in May and it appears to be the first time in history that the British tackle dealer has had a periodical devoted entirely to his interests.

Swan Mussels

The largest of the British freshwater mussels are, I believe, the swan mussels, and for years I have accepted the name without giving it much thought.

These mussels are really big—a shell 6in. long is not exceptional—and in areas where they abound they are fairly frequently caught by unfortunate anglers upon whose bait the mussels seizes.

They are not much in evidence on the waters I usually fish, but I recently visited a stretch of water in which they were plentiful. There were a couple of swans nests, a few swans, and several of those preening places where swans elect to stand on the bank and comb out their spare feathers. At each of these places I noticed in the shallows a collection of empty mussel shells—as many as twenty in one of the bigger groups.

For the first time I connected "swan" and "mussel," but not very happily. I always thought that swans (and I refer to mute swans throughout) were to all intents vegetarians, and a swan mussel provides a large and solid piece of flesh.

"The Handbook of British Birds" says of the food of the mute swan: "Chiefly subaqueous vegetation, but also confervae and water-weeds . . . ; rhizomes of reed, arrowhead and stalks, roots and buds of other aquatic plants. Some animal matter also taken : small frogs and toads, tadpoles, worms, freshwater Mollusca, occasionally small fish *(Alburnus)* and insects with their larvae. Adult Amphibia and young waterfowl killed at times ; in case of latter by drowning, but not eaten."

Fresh-water Mollusca certainly includes swan mussels, but I think the writer had in mind much smaller shelled creatures. It would be interesting to know if anyone can verify a mussel-eating habit among swans.

Tench at Dawn

Read any book, chapter or article on tench fishing and the odds are a fixed-spool reel to a spade-end hook that you will be told the best time to catch tench is the early morning when the first glimmers of light appear in the sky, preferably in June or July.

It is sound advice, which I give and follow—but the results are no more certain than with any other dictums about fishing.

As is usual at this time of the year I went for one of my all-night sessions to a canal that holds a good head of excellent tench. The conditions seemed perfect—a hot day followed by a warm night, the warmth kept in by an almost complete cloud cover.

My companion and I obeyed all the rules. We groundbaited our respective pitches, fished until dark, dozed until 3.30 a.m., and awoke full of expectations for the first-light fishing.

Nothing happened. Birds awoke and did their chorus act. The cloud dispersed and the sun came up while we sat, hidden and motionless, watching equally motionless floats. It was after 7 a.m. when a float quivered, levelled and went down. A little later the landing net got its first wetting. From then on, for about an hour, tench were on the feed.

We had good sport—but why they should choose to wait until the sun came well up, bringing with it a chilly wind, only the tench know.

Water Consumption

In 1949 the Ministry of Health forecast, on the basis of the ten years from 1938 to 1948, that by 1970 water undertakings would face a demand for twice the water used in 1938. In a recent article in *The Times* Professor W. G. V. Balchin examined this forecast in the light of consumption in 1956, citing comparative figures for 22 representative centres of population. These show only too clearly how water consumption is increasing.

One set of figures shows the consumption in gallons per head per day, and these make puzzling and most amusing reading. I presume certain types of industry are responsible for some of the differences but it cannot fully account for the fact that a man in Newport uses 100 gallons a day while a dweller in Sutton uses only 30.3. Those are the extremes on each side of an average of 47 gallons. The second highest is Manchester (60.3) and the second lowest Southend (32.8).

Harpoon Gun Licences

As a result of a court case in which an underwater swimmer was fined 10s. for being in possession of a harpoon gun without a licence, members of at least one big Skin Diving Club have been advised by their secretary to get licences.

A decision in a magistrates' court is not necessarily a correct intepretation of the law, especially when, as in this case, a situation presents itself for which there is no precedent. I understand that a legal opinion is being sought by the Federation of Sports Outfitters.

A harpoon gun discharged in the air is quite a weapon and I would much sooner face an enemy with an air gun if I had the misfortune to face one or the other. An air gun must be licensed if used off the owner's property, and it seems only just that harpoon guns should be subject to the same rule.

I am not an avid reader of Whodunits, so I do not know if anyone has yet concocted the harpoon gun murder—above or below water.

Spinning Dos and Don'ts

(Continued from page 542)

everything else, allowed the many who believe no such thing to have their head for a few years, no harm would be done, and the proof would be there for all to see. Certainly far more fish would be caught over the season.

With one important proviso—no baiting, of any kind, in September on the Dee. Killing fat, old hens and razor-backed cocks is not very stimulating sport, and is demonstratively wasteful of good salmon flesh and potential ova. Proprietors would be doing some real good if they prohibited the killing of "back-end" hens completely.

And the powers that be on the Dee would also be using their time to good advantage if they opened the season a fortnight or so earlier—in mid-January—unless they can supply cogent reasons why they should *not* ! Some very excellent suggestions in favour of this historic move can readily be made.

Meanwhile, on the Dee, one cannot fish bait in certain places at certain times. Would someone responsible for this ruling take time off and tell the salmon anglers *why*.

Gundog News

Conducted by P. R. A. MOXON, Herne Common, Herne Bay, Kent

WE are all inclined to get despondent about our dogs at times, for even with the best of puppies it is very seldom that the entire training programme goes smoothly from start to finish. At any rate I know that I have many moments of despondency over the dogs, both my own and those belonging to other people for whom I am training. Indeed, there are times when I come indoors feeling suicidal, fling myself down in a chair and ask myself why I continue in such a trying and wearying job as dog training.

Usually by the next day — and sometimes within the next hour or two—I am full of enthusiasm again, and it not infrequently happens that if I take out one of the more vexing dogs whilst in this hopeful frame of mind I find that it is not so bad, after all, and has its good points and may, with encouragement, gradually turn-out as I want and had expected it to.

That dogs can sense our moods and react accordingly I do not doubt for one moment. That is why I stress always in my writings the folly of trying to train a dog if you are in a bad mood yourself. Not only will you more quickly become irritated if it misbehaves, but more likely than not the dog will *seem* worse if you are in a black mood to start with. On the other hand, if you are feeling " on top of the world " the dog will quickly sense this, and you will obtain far more from it.

Whilst few of us can hope to feel bubbling over with joy all the time, neither are we likely to be always depressed or despondent, and in between times we may be said to be feeling " middling," a country term but very expressive. So I try to do my training when I am feeling really good or middling, and when " in the depths " I do something else—repair kennels, clean the car, send out bills, or have a good nap. I find it equally hopeless to try and write an article, or even a decent letter, when I am in low spirits.

The man who tries to train a dog when feeling fed-up with life is very liable to make serious mistakes and may well ruin his chances of making a success of his dog. This is a sweeping statement, but true, for one can give the dog an entirely wrong impression so easily and without any intention of so doing. I think the greatest danger lies in expecting the pupil to understand what we require without being shown, and it should always be remembered that whereas we can explain to a child what we expect of it, a dog must be shown or taught in such a way that it really grasps the situation. Association of ideas and example, the gradual welding together of two or more seemingly unconnected items of training in such a way that the pupil cannot fail to grasp our requirements.

Puppies Are Like Children

Dogs, and especially puppies of training age, vary just as much as do children. Some are willing and eager to please, and quick to " get the hang of things," whereas others may be slow and apparently dull-witted, or even appear to be deliberately evil and self-willed. These latter animals can almost always be put on the right track if the trainer can keep his temper and his sense of humour, and perseveres after giving careful consideration to the whys and wherefores of the aggravating behaviour of the pupil.

In some cases, the pupil needs a rest from training, perhaps having become bored from too much repetitive work. Some dogs can take more than others. In other cases the reverse applies, and the puppy needs to see more of you and have more intensive work, or perhaps to have the work made more varied and interesting.

I will give an example of this. I have frequently found that a spaniel has become exasperatingly stubborn about discipline and dummy work, and have cast my mind round for a reason. Sometimes I have decided that it is just through boredom and lack of excitement, and I have taken the puppy into the rabbit pen and let it hunt about and chase (sometimes pretending that I was concentrating upon something else, such as mending the fence).

Steadiness to ferret—a lesson some dogs could do with!

Gratifying Results

When the puppy has had a good gallop and lots of fun with the rabbits, I call it up and take it out in the woods or fields and try it again on the work in which it was slacking, more often than not with most gratifying results. It sometimes pays to put the dog away in kennel after the gallop in the pen and do nothing further with it until later in the day, or even the next day, but the result is nearly always the same.

Although many puppies in training show signs of stubborness and a general dislike of discipline, it often happens that a dog becomes what I term " sticky," during or after an intensive course of obedience. The first signs of this are dropping without orders, or reluctance to move from the drop when called or whistled. This happens quite commonly with a puppy in the hands of an over-enthusiastic novice trainer who is heavily overdoing the intensive obedience and dummy course, and I have mentioned it before. Trying to get a puppy along too quickly, even if you are being perfectly gentle and tactful about it all, is a great mistsake, and you run the risk of taking all the zip and initiative out of your pupil.

Although I am not an advocate of the system as a general rule, I have had some gratifying results with difficult dogs (spaniels in particular) by training them in the rabbit pen before they are absolutely reliable about discipline. Normally, before taking a spaniel into the pen I want it a good retriever of the dummy, steady to throw, absolutely steady on the drop, and with instant response to whistle or command to sit, both when close at hand or at a distance. Yet with some of these puzzling dogs about which I am writing I have taken them in the pen before such a happy state of training has been achieved, and have got more out of them there, despite the distractions of the rabbits, than I did on bare and uninteresting ground.

A Matter for Improvisation

Maybe there has been an unfortunate chase and other lapses, but the pupil has been so much happier and more carefree that it has responded far better to my commands after a time, and two or three such visits to the pen (sometimes with the check-cord, but usually free) has done as much as several weeks might have achieved on other ground.

I know that readers are going to complain that they have not got access to a rabbit pen wherein to work their dogs, and that therefore I am wasting paper in telling them about it. However, surely this is one of those things about which the owner can put on his thinking cap and improvise, or at any rate comprehend the underlying principle that I am getting at, and take steps to create situations for the pupil which will have the same effect as the rabbit pen. At any rate, get the dog out and about, let it meet people and things, have a change of scenery when at exercise, and in general do all you can to make its life a happy one and not just a series of lessons given with great concentration and seriousness.

Remember that my own dogs are essentially kennel dogs, and that they naturally become bored from time to time by their conditions and kennel companions. A change is as good as a rest . . . even for a dog. I do not suppose my dogs get any more intensive training than those belonging to an enthusiastic member of a training class—probably less—because I am having to deal with more at one time: But even the single dog which lives indoors and sees a great deal of its owner can (and often does) get bored and dispirited, especially if the owner is enthusiastic and is always " at it " about discipline and training generally.

I do not wish to give the impression that there need be no such thing as a gundog which fails in training. Unfortunately there very definitely is a proportion of dogs which fail in training for one reason or another. However, the discerning and interested owner can usually see some potential possibilities in his dog if they exist, and this may make it well worth while persevering with. A dog may be a good hunter and possess a keen nose, and show style and pace, but is stubborn about bringing in its retrieves, for example.

Such a pupil is well worth persevering with if you have the time, the energy and the patience. On the other hand, a *really* gunshy specimen (not just a gun-*nervy* one), a *confirmed* hard mouth (not simply the odd nip through excitement in the early stages of game retrieving), a bad tempered fighter or, more simply, just a dog which you cannot take to, no matter how hard you try, is a waste of time and energy, and should be " outed " at once.

I have written before of the importance of liking your dog. I think that you can only obtain the best from an animal which really appeals to you (even though it may not be a particularly good speciment of its breed), and it is not enough simply to like it because it is yours. You have got really to care for it—think the world of it, in fact, and let it know this. Once a dog feels that you have taken to it the response will be there and the feeling becomes mutual, which bodes well for future success. I think it is a complete waste of time to keep a dog simply because you happened to buy it and feel that you must justify your choice. Get rid of it quickly if you cannot "take to" it, and replace it with one which really appeals to you.

The Impartial Professional

I believe that the average man or woman will get more out of an indifferent dog which they really care for than they will out of a potentially great one which they cannot really "take to." The professional trainer tries to be impartial and to like all his charges equally, but human nature being what it is this is impossible, and with the best will in the world he just cannot get that something extra out of the dogs which do not appeal to him. The private owner does not have to be impartial. If he does not like the one dog he acquires he can get another.

Although it is only July, field trials will soon be occupying the attention of many readers, and, of course, the preparation of dogs has already begun in many kennels. I hope that this season, more than ever, we shall witness the encouragement of newcomers and beginners in the sport. These days the owner-handler is the backbone of trials, and every recruit is doing a service to the shooting world. That many will be disappointed at the end of the first few trials goes without saying. Some will be disappointed in the judging, others in the general conduct of the trials, and maybe even of the treatment received from some of the spectators and fellow handlers.

However, let it be hoped that the new recruits will find that, on balance, trials are happy events and fairly conducted, and that much of the apparently evil "backbitting" is really good-natured banter, for such it usually is. The great thing about trials, whether you win or lose (and you are far more likely to do the latter!) is to be satisfied with the performance of your dog. If you finish a stake and can feel that the dog has worked well and made the most of its chances, what does it matter that you were not in the money? Whatever else you do, watch closely the best handlers and try to learn from them. We cannot all hope to be a John Kent or a Chudley or a Joe Greatorex, but at least we can do our best to emulatae them.

Most newcomers will feel as I still do at trials — far too full of nerves to take anything in properly, but for all that they should still manage to enjoy them. It may well be that you will be disappointed in your dog, especially if you do not get cracking *now* on any weaknesses that have appeared in its training. Leave nothing until the last minute, except the dog. Leave that alone for a day or two before the trial, as I suggested in a recent article, rather than carry out an intensive and serious refresher which will do anything but refresh either the dog or yourself.

FIELD TRIALS

The Cambridgeshire Field Trial Society held their working test on Whit Monday at Gorhambury by kind invitation of their president, the Hon. J. Grimston, M.P. One could almost say it was field trial weather, for it was cold with showers. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves, and it was a great success. The course was well laid out and the water test was a stiff one. The judges were Mr. J. Curtis (Sandringham) and Mr. R. Baldwin.

The winner was Mr. D. Stobart's labrador bitch Bevern Bridge Martha, who put up a faultless display. She has great pace and style and is a joy to watch. In cover she was outstanding. Second was Mr. A. Lees's golden retriever dog Crusader of Colchis. This dog worked well but lacked the drive of the winner. Third was Mr. John Kent's labrador dog Brandy of Chrishall. Worked extremely well for his handler, but was unlucky not to find his second dummy quicker. There was little between second and third. Fourth was Mr. D. A. Mansfield's golden retriever dog Treunair Triagh.

* * *

The Gamekeepers' National Association will be holding retriever trials at Lennoxlove Estate, Haddington, on September 19 and 20, the judges being the Lady Auckland, Mr. Graham Blacklock and Brigadier Gilroy. Secretary, Andrew Stewart, Hills Tower, Lochfoot, Dumfries.

* * *

The Flatcoated Retriever Society Trials will be at Kinlet Park, Bewdley, Worcs., on November 20, the judges being Mrs. A. Heywood Lonsdale, Mr. T. Greatorex and Mr. R. B. Weston Webb. Secretary, H. Wilson, The Hill, Moss Road, Lambeg, Co. Antrim, N.I.

Wildfowling Clubs

The Wildfowlers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland: Hon. Secretary, Lt.-Commdr. J. W. Anderton, R.N.V.R., 19 Castle Street, Liverpool, 2.

* * *

The Annual General Meeting of the **Home Counties Wildfowlers' Association** was held on May 10 at The Old Bell, Holborn.

Members were welcomed by the chairman, Mr. E. L. Parish, who, in his report, outlined the progress made by the Association and gave a very enlightening forecast of the dangers and problems of the future.

The secretary, Mr. R. W. Stagg, in his report reviewed the past year's activities and work in committee, and in conclusion regretted that it would be necessary for him to resign from the secretaryship for personal reasons. Mr. A. E. Fox, the treasurer, then presented the balance sheet and the Association's budget.

Further reports were made by Messrs. Holmes, Carter, Harris and Roberts, on the subjects of duck rearing and liaison work.

The following officers were elected for the ensuing year: President, Mr. G. L. Hoyes; chairman, Mr. E. L. Parish; secretary, Mr. J. H. Carter; treasurer, Mr. A. E. Fox; hon. auditors, B. de Vere Hardcastle and Burton; hon legal advisor, Mr. N. Laing; hon. librarian, Mr. E. Butterworth; hon. gamekeeper, Mr. P. C. Harris. Executive Committee: Messrs. R. Holmes, R. Stagg, J. Lee, D. Whitton, D. Foster, P. Taylor, Baron A. Konopka, Messrs. W. Harris, J. Lansdell, B. Grugeon Ticehurst, J. Canham, J. Bunney, Bailey, P. Harris, Shaw, E. Butterworth, Bishop and N. Warren.

The elections were followed by a lively discussion on the Association's future plans and activities.

The address of the new hon. secretary is 7a Boulevard Mansions, Balham High Road, London, S.W.17.

Eighteen members and two friends attended the clay pigeon shoot held by H.C.W.A. on Sunday, May, 12, 1957, at Tongham, Surrey.

Shooting began at 2.15 p.m. with 6 birds practice on the skeet range.

This was followed by 10 single birds, open to all comers. E. Butterworth won this event with 9x10 closely followed by J. Noel with 8x10.

The St. Huberts Cup (Members Only) was then shot off. 10 Birds Skeet. A tie for first place with nine kills each by R. Roberts and R. Locke was eventually won by R. Roberts who again registered nine kills.

The Cup was presented by Mr. Southwood, a member of the St. Hubert Club, who, incidentally proved very good at clays with a borrowed gun. (Don Foster could not do as well with his own gun.)

After a short interval for tea a further two open shoots were held.

Ten birds double was won by J. Anderson, R. Locke again finishing a close second.

The last shoot was very popular, being suggested by David Anne, a 10 bird double simultaneous release, which again resulted in a tie for first place, between J. Anderson and D. Anne, the former following up his previous success by winning the shoot off. He had travelled from Colchester to attend this meeting, a very worthy performance.

Shooting finished at 8.0 p.m. and although the weather was not all it could have been, a very strong south wind for the majority of the afternoon and intermittent heavy showers, a good time was had by all.

Tongham will remember the H.C.W.A., especially J. Butterworth and his Blunderbuss and black powder cartridges.

B. Bailey presented the prizes to winners and runner-up at the end of the meeting.

Skeet 10 Birds Open: 1, J. Butterworth, Cup and 10s.; 2, J. Noel, 10s.

Skeet 10 Birds St. Hubert Cup: 1, R. Roberts, St. Hubert Cup and Spoon; 2, R. Locke, 10s.

Skeet 10 Birds Double: 1, J. Anderson, Cup and 10s.; 2, R. Locke, 10s.

Skeet 10 Birds Double (S.R.): 1, J. Anderson, Cup and 10s.; 2, D. Anne, 10s.

Ladies' Prize: Mrs. P. Noel, 10s.

* * *

As there are a not inconsiderable number of members of The Chichester Wildfowlers' Association residing in or close to London, it was recently decided to hold impromptu meetings of these members on the third Tuesday of each month at The Goat Tavern, Stafford Street, Old Bond Street, off Piccadilly. Two meetings have already been held, and the next one will be on July 16 at 8 o'clock. Any members of the Association and their friends will be welcome.

Forthcoming Field Trials

SECRETARIES OF FIELD TRIAL SOCIETIES ARE INVITED TO SEND US REPORTS OF THEIR TRIALS FOR PUBLICATION IN "THE SHOOTING TIMES." REPORTS SHOULD BE SENT DIRECT TO THE KENNEL EDITOR, MR. P. R. A. MOXON, HERNE COMMON, HERNE BAY, KENT.

July 23 & 24: Irish Setter Association (England) and the Setter and Pointer Club. Shap. Judges: The Earl of Northesk and Mr. P. B. Fletcher (Eire). Joint Secretaries: W. J. Rasbridge, Heatherbank, Ottways Lane, Ashtead, Surrey, and Capt. H. W. Mears, Fellside Keswick, Cumberland.

July 26 & 27: Yorkshire Gundog Club (Pointers and Setters). Secretary: Mrs. E. H. Bailey, Longclose, Bolton Hill, Bessacarr, Doncaster.

July 29 & 30: English Setter Club. Alston, Northumberland. Secretary: Dr. J. B. Maurice, Isbury House, Marlborough, Wilts.

Aug. 1: North of Scotland Gundog Association (Pointers and Setters). Secretary: W. Emslie, 58 Dee Street, Aberdeen.

A
REMINDER FOR
TOMORROW
SATURDAY, JULY 13th
●
AN OPEN SHOOT
1 p.m.
ENTRIES UP TO 3 p.m.
WALTHAM ABBEY
GUN CLUB
HONEY LANE - WALTHAM ABBEY
(Near Isolation Hospital)

Comfort for the dog and a clean gun in a hide dug with the entrenching tool.

FOWLING CLOTHES AND EQUIPMENT

by G. L. Carlisle

"What shall I need to take; gum boots and an extra sweater?"

"Well, there are one or two other things. I'll make you a list."

EXPERIENCED wildfowlers have pretty firm ideas about what is needed on a 'fowling trip and what is superfluous, like a white duffle coat. But most of us can learn something from other people; I often pick up new notions and I think part of the enjoyment of such a trip, and its success, lies in the preparations beforehand.

How to keep warm, particularly what can be done for "ends," ears, toes and fingers? Advice on this subject appears in many shooting books but frequently it is not sufficiently specific. Here are some details.

Starting at the top, a hat with a brim all round is better than an ordinary tweed cap; the deer-stalker type keeps the neck dry during rain. Let the jacket reach to the top of the thigh boots and be made of thornproof material. It is expensive, but lasts for years. An old mackintosh with ten inches of the bottom hem folded up inside and sewn in place makes a good jacket; the fold at the hem forms a useful all-the-way-round pocket.

The most waterproof over-trousers are of plastic rubber, made for sailing, worn outside the thigh boots and preferably cut away just below the knee. They should be of a drab colour, grey being one of the easiest obtainable. Surplus store anti-gas trousers are of little use, being yellow, noisy to walk in and very vulnerable to barbed wire etc.

One of the best top garments next below the jacket is an Icelandic sweater, with the natural oil in the wool.

Big Boots

Everyone knows that thick socks are needed inside thigh boots, but few realise that it is almost impossible to have the boots too big. Plenty of room allows the blood to circulate in the feet and, of course, also simplifies "baling out" of the boots in a hurry when caught in soft mud. George, with whom I shoot, has a pair of boots which fit him; and he grumbles every time he puts them on and when he takes them off his sigh of relief is like that of the smart lady who wears the latest thing in high heels, one size too small. My big boots are comfortable, but expensive on socks, which I have to turn round 90° each time a hole appears! Leather soles keep feet warmer and they should be studded; they are more expensive than rubber soles, but they are more comfortable and they are safer for rock scrambling either on the shore or when river fishing in the summer.

Hands and Ears

Now for the hands; my solution is a pair of ordinary wool-lined tan leather gloves, which are dressed occasionally with Mars oil. The trigger finger of the right glove is cut on the inside of the middle joint so that it can be folded over the back of the hand, where it is secured by a "popper" fastener. If the concave part of the "popper" is put on the knuckle, with the convex part above the finger nail, it is less painful when absent-mindedly wiping one's nose on the back of the hand! For really cold, wet conditions the next step is to have a larger pair of rubber or plastic gauntlets; the left one is worn over the leather glove, while the right is tied with string to belt or button. The right hand can then be inserted partially into the gauntlet, keeping the leather glove out of the rain or snow, and it can be whipped out and on to the small of the butt in order to shoot. The trigger finger is already bared to feel for the correct trigger. These gauntlets can be bought cheaply at cycle shops.

For the ears a woollen head band as worn by skiers is satisfactory and it does not stifle the sound of approaching birds as does a hood. An alternative is a thick woollen scarf knitted like a stocking, with one end open. This end can then be put over the head and ears and the rest wrapped round the neck.

A small and light extra protection against sitting still for hours in pouring rain is a plastic mackintosh. Emphasis is made on sitting still because these mackintoshes will not stand any rough wear. They have the advantage, however, of folding up very small when not in use. A face-veil is worthwhile, and useful for pigeon shooting too; the cheapest form, apart from daubing oneself with mud, is the thigh part of a nylon stocking pulled over the head, with the seam partially slit for comfort.

A canvas gun stocking protects the gun in the car when the normal gun case takes up too much room. A gun sling is really useful. They are almost always used on the Continent and I can never understand why more shooters do not use them here. With the gun slung across the back both hands are free to climb a gate, jump a dyke, crawl along on hands and knees or grab the dog or your companion's whisky flask.

Dogs and Digging in

A dog, of course, is probably the most essential item of equipment after the gun; a small piece of sacking for him to sit on seems a reasonable gesture in very cold weather. You might even think it worthwhile to include an inflatable rubber cushion for yourself in the game bag.

Even if you don't intend to dig a "grave" some sort of digging implement is a great help to scoop out a small platform to sit on in the bank of a creek; or if you are squatting behind low cover you can dig a hole for your feet. A garden trowel will suffice, but an entrenching tool is better. They can be obtained from surplus stores.

You will not forget, of course, torch or, better still, two, compass, pull-through and cartridge extractor. It is always the "chance of a lifetime" that is missed through not having the last two.

Binoculars add interest in watching and identifying the birds, but they are also useful for observing that queer character across the marsh who may be some fellow who is making for your favourite spot or just old Joe to whom you would be glad to talk. I use a monocular which often surprises people, but it seems very sensible to me since it cost less to buy and it is small and light and fits in my breast pocket.

If you are going to a new area it is always a good thing to take a one inch map. Fowlers often forget this and waste time trying to find their way round the estuary on unsignposted lanes and tracks.

Gun sling, over-gauntlets and gloves with trigger finger free.

Finally, the best fowling mixture I know to put in the flask is rum and whisky. It is a consolation back at the car for having, as I sometimes, find, remembered all the other bits of clothing and equipment, but apparently brought blank cartridges by mistake.

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